

**OFFICIAL NAME:** United States of America

**CAPITAL:** Washington DC

**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Federal Multiparty Republic

**AREA:** 9,372,608 Sq Km (3,618,784 Sq Mi)

**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION:** 271,290,000

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**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** The United States is located on the North American Continent and is the fourth largest country in the world. The national territory consists of three separated territories. (1.) The continental 48 states, (2.) Alaska and (3.) Hawaii. The country consists of an east Atlantic coastal plain which is 320 km (198 miles) in width and is backed by the Appalachian Mountain Range from the Great Lakes in the north to Alabama state in the south. The Appalachian Range is divided into parallel chains that include the Allegheny Mountains, the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Catskill Mountains. South of the Appalachians the Atlantic coastal plain broadens out into the Gulf of Mexico and down to the Florida Peninsula, while to the west the Gulf Plains run north where the Ozark Mountains separate them from the higher, Great Plains. The Great Plains rise east to west to meet the Rocky Mountains which have elevations of over 4,200 metres (13,780 feet). Of the continental 48 states, 25% of the land area is made up of plateaux while another 25% consists of mountains and the coastal plains account for about 10%. The coast of southeast Alaska is mountainous with glaciers and fjords while the Alaskan Peninsula and Aleutian Islands form an arc of more than 75 volcanoes. Interior Alaska is for the most part the drainage basin of the state's principal river, the Yukon and its tributaries. The Arctic Slope is a fringe less coastal plain containing Point Barrow the northern most point in the USA. The Hawaiian Islands are volcanic formations of basaltic lava flows, located in the Pacific Ocean. The territory consists of 5 principal islands as well as four smaller ones while the terrain is hilly and the coastlines are mostly rocky and rough. Northeast USA is drained by rivers, such as the Genesee, that flow into the St. Lawrence or Great Lakes. The east coast rivers such as the Susquehanna, Hudson, Delaware, Potomac, Roanoake and Savannah flow into the Atlantic Ocean. The central plains are drained by the great Red-

Missouri-Mississippi River System as well as the Trinity, Saline, Alabama and Flint Rivers which flow into the Gulf of Mexico. The Columbia River in Washington state flows to the Pacific Ocean and in the southwest the Colorado river flows to the Gulf of California. Other U.S. dependencies or territories; American Samoa - see separate entry; Guam - is the southern most and largest of the Mariana Islands, located around 2,170 km (1,300 mi) west of Honolulu, Hawaii. The island is of volcanic origin and is surrounded by coral reefs while the climate is tropical maritime, characterized by warm and humid conditions which are moderated by the northeast trade winds; Virgin Islands - consists of 68 islands and are located 64 km (40 mi) east of Puerto Rico. The islands have a rugged and mountainous terrain with little level land while the climate is sub-tropical with relatively low humidity although conditions are tempered by the easterly trade winds; Marshall Islands - see separate entry; The Federated States of Micronesia - see separate entry; Northern Mariana Islands - consists of 16 islands located around 5,635 km (3,381 mi) west-southwest of Honolulu, Hawaii. The southern islands are composed of limestone and ringed by coral reefs while the northern islands are of volcanic origin. The climate is tropical maritime, moderated by the northeast trade winds; Palau also known as Belau - consists of some 200 islands in an archipelago that stretches for 650 km (390 mi), located 7,150 km (4,290 mi) southwest of Hawaii and 1,160 km (696 mi) south of Guam. The terrain varies from mountainous islands such as Babelthuap to low, flat coral islands ringed by reefs. The wet season is from May to November and typhoons are also common; Baker Island - is a small uninhabited island located in the North Pacific Ocean around halfway between Hawaii and Australia, and is mostly a flat sandy coral island; Jarvis Island - a small uninhabited island located in the South Pacific Ocean around 2,090 km (1,254 mi) south of Hawaii, and is sandy coral island with a fringing reef; Johnston Atoll - is a small uninhabited island located in the North Pacific Ocean around 1,328 km (797 mi) southwest of Hawaii. The islands have a maximum elevation of 4 metres (13 feet) and are a former nuclear weapons test site; Midway Islands - are a group of islands located some 2,350 km (1,410 mi) northwest of Honolulu, Hawaii. The islands are low, flat coral formations with a tropical climate, moderated by the prevailing easterlies. Major Cities (pop. est.); New York 7,333,000, Los Angeles 3,449,000, Chicago

2,732,000, Houston 1,702,000, Philadelphia 1,524,000, San Diego 1,152,000, Phoenix 1,049,000, Dallas 1,023,000, San Antonio 999,000, Detroit 992,000 (1994). Land Use; forested 30%, pastures 25%, agricultural-cultivated 20%, other 25% (1993).

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**CLIMATE:** The United States has a varied climate with conditions characteristic of temperate deserts to arctic. In general, the eastern seaboard has a continental climate due to the masses of air moving principally from west to east, except for Florida where the winters are the warmest in Continental USA and summers are hot with tornadoes common in the Mississippi River region. Central USA has a continental climate with extreme variations in temperature. Winters are usually cold with frequent blizzards while summers are hot and subject to tornadoes with conditions semiarid to the west and humid to the east. Coastal California has a warm Mediterranean climate while the Pacific Northwest Coast has a maritime climate influenced by the prevailing westerlies with cool summers and mild winters. Average temperature ranges in Washington DC are from -3 to 6 degrees Celsius (27 to 43 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 20 to 31 degrees Celsius (68 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

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**PEOPLE:** The principal ethnic group are the Whites of European origin who account for approximately 76% of the population. Other ethnic minorities include African Americans who account for 12% of the population while Hispanics account for around 9%, Asians and Pacific Islanders for around 3% and the AmerIndians, Eskimos and Aleuts constitute 0.7% combined.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 27 persons per sq km (70 persons per sq mi) (1993). Urban-Rural; 75.2% urban, 24.8% rural (1991). Sex Distribution; 48.8% male, 51.2% female (1991). Life Expectancy at Birth; 73.0 years white male, 68.1 years black or other male, 79.7 years white female, 76.2 years black or other female (1991). Age Breakdown; 22% under 15, 23% 15 to 29, 24% 30 to 44, 14% 45 to

59, 12% 60 to 74, 5% 75 and over (1991). Birth Rate; 15.7 per 1,000 (1993). Death Rate; 8.6 per 1,000 (1993). Increase Rate; 7.1 per 1,000 (1993). Infant Mortality Rate; 8.5 per 1,000 live births (1992).

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**RELIGIONS:** Mostly Christians with 53% of the population Protestant while 26% are Roman Catholic and 8% are other denominations. Other religious minorities include Jews which account for 2% and Muslims for 2% of the population.

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**LANGUAGES:** The United States has no official language, although English is the national language. Other languages include a sizable Spanish speaking minority as well as other various ethnic minority languages.

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**EDUCATION:** Aged 25 or over and having attained: incomplete primary education 6.2%, primary 4.4%, incomplete secondary 11.0%, secondary 38.6%, some post secondary 18.4%, higher 21.4% (1991). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 166,497,565 or 95.5% (1980).

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**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** In 1945 the United States became a founding member of the UN. In Mar. 1947 Pres. Harry S. Truman announced the establishment of the Truman Doctrine, which pledged US support to nations threatened by communism. In Sept. 1949 the Soviet Union was able to detonate its first atomic bomb, which resulted in the US developing the hydrogen bomb, which was in turn quickly matched by the Soviet Union. During the late 1940's and throughout the 1950's the Cold War race for military superiority was well underway with both countries competing in development and stock piles of nuclear weapons. From 1950 to 1953 the US fought in the Korean War and supported France in their Indochina War from 1946 to 1954. In 1953 Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeded Pres. Truman. In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled that compulsory segregation in public schools was

unconstitutional. In 1955 Martin Luther King began organizing a civil disobedience movement to protest discrimination against the Blacks which resulted in serious riots during the 1960's. In Jan. 1961 John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as President and in Apr. 1961 there was an abortive CIA-backed attempt, called the Bay of Pigs, to oust Cuban President, Fidel Castro . In 1962 after the discovery of Soviet nuclear missile bases in Cuba, the US imposed naval as well as air blockades on Cuba while Pres. Kennedy demanded that the Soviet Union dismantle the missiles. For several days the world stood on the brink of its first nuclear war, however, the USSR later removed the missiles. On Nov. 22, 1963 Pres. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas by Lee Harvey Oswald and was succeeded by Lyndon Baines Johnson. In 1964 King's movement finally led to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act. In Aug. 1964 the Tonkin Gulf resolution was passed which led to the US sending combat troops in 1965 to join Vietnam's war, which it had been supporting since 1961. On July 20, 1969 astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon. In 1969 widespread antiwar demonstrations began to escalate and in 1970 four students were shot dead by the National Guard during a protest at Kent State University after US incursions into Cambodia. In 1973 the US removed its last ground troops from Vietnam. In Aug. 1974 Pres. Richard Nixon, who was elected in 1969, became the first president to resign from office due to the "Watergate Affair" which resulted from his handling of an investigation into a burglary of the Democratic Party's headquarters, by a team hired by the President's Republican campaign party. Pres. Nixon was succeeded by his Vice President, Gerald Ford. In 1976 Democrat, Jimmy Carter was elected President and in 1978 Pres. Carter was instrumental in the Camp David Accord which secured peace between Egypt and Israel. In 1979 the US established diplomatic relations with China. In 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected President and in Mar. 1981 just two months after the President's inauguration there was an unsuccessful assassination attempt by John Hinckley. In 1985 the US and USSR began summit meetings which were followed by subsequent summits in 1987 and 1988 that led to the Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) which provided for the elimination of all Soviet/US intermediate nuclear land-based weapons. Between 1985 and 1986 the US attempted to win the release of hostages held by Lebanese Islamic fundamentalists through secret arms deals with Iran so

that the proceeds from the sales could aid the Contra guerrillas in Nicaragua. These secret arms deals later became known as the Iran-Contra affair. In Apr. 1986 Pres. Reagan ordered the bombing of key Libyan military installations after demands were ignored to halt their support of terrorist activities around the world. In Nov. 1986 National Security adviser Robert Macfarlane, his successor Adml. Poindexter and Lt.Col. Oliver North were implicated in the IranContra affair. In 1986 the US space craft Challenger exploded just minutes after being launched and all 7 crew members were killed. In 1989 Pres. Reagan was succeeded by his Vice President, George Bush and in Dec. 1989 Pres. Bush ordered US troops to invade Panama, to remove and arrest Gen. Manuel Noriega, who was returned to the US to stand trial on several drug indictments. In Aug. 1990 Pres. Bush sent troops to Saudi Arabia in a build up to the Gulf War after Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait. On Jan. 17, 1991 "Operation Desert Storm" began and by Feb. 27, 1991 Kuwait had been liberated with only 148 of the 450,000 troops killed in action. In Oct. 1991 the US actively increased its diplomatic efforts for peace around the world and in particular for regional peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Arab states. In Nov. 1991 the US economy was showing signs of a worsening recession with some 240,000 job cuts by employers and business insolvencies up by 11% despite unemployment being on 7.1% in December. Also in 1991 the last remaining US kidnap hostages held in Lebanon as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict were released and the US announced a \$1 billion package of loan guarantees for the former USSR following its breakup. In 1992 race riots erupted in Los Angeles following the acquittal of four white policemen caught on camera beating an African American motorist, Rodney King. In the riots thousands of African American and Hispanic locals took to the streets burning and looting shops and business. As a result of the riots property damage ran into the hundreds of millions of dollars and the white LA Police Dept. chief, Darryl Gates retired and was succeeded by an African American, Willie Williams. In Sept. 1992 Hurricane Andrew caused billions of dollars in property damage and left thousands homeless after it lashed the Florida Peninsula. In Nov. 1992 Democrat, William Jefferson "Bill" Clinton was elected to succeed George Bush as President. In Dec. 1992 the US committed some 28,000 troops to Somalia for humanitarian aid. Also in 1992 the US administration met with Russian Pres. Boris

Yeltsin and agreed to a further Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, START II. In Jan. 1993 Bill Clinton was inaugurated as President, and then declared he would seek an end to the US military forces ban on homosexuals. Early in his term Pres. Clinton endeavored to introduce two new pieces of legislation, an economic stimulation plan and a deficit reduction plan, both of which met with stiff opposition from the Republicans. After months of negotiations the deficit reduction legislation, which was expected to cut \$500 million from the budget deficit, passed through the Senate despite being watered down. In 1993, under the guidance of first lady Hillary Clinton, the government announced a overhaul of the US health care system in which there was to be universal coverage for all Americans, employer contributions of up to 80% of their employees' health insurance costs and a system of controls over medical costs. Also in 1993 Pres. Clinton announced that the US troops based in Somalia were to be completely withdrawn by March 1994 following the death of 18 soldiers in a gun battle after a failed attempt to capture the main warlord, Muhammad Farah Aydid.

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**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the Dollar (USD) divided into 100 Cents.

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**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$6,738,400,000,000 (1994). National Debt; USD \$4,613,524,000,000 (1994). Imports; USD \$683,830,000,000 (1994). Exports; USD \$512,416,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$77,653,000,000 (1994). Balance of Trade; USD -\$151,300,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 131,056,000 or 50.3% of total population (1994). Unemployed; 6.1% (1994).

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**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** The United States trades with almost 200 countries and its main trading partners are Canada, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, China, Germany, other EU countries and Latin America.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Cereals, Citrus Fruits, Coal, Copper,

Cotton, Fish, Gold, Iron Ore, Lead, Livestock, Molybdenum, Oil Seeds, Oil and Natural Gas, Potatoes, Silver, Soya Beans, Sugar, Timber, Tobacco, Vegetables and Fruits, Zinc.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Aircraft, Chemicals, Computers, Electronics, Fishing, Forestry, Iron and Steel, Motor Vehicles, Mining, Paper and Pulp, Telecommunication Equipment, Textiles.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Aircraft, Cereals, Chemicals, Coal, Electrical and Electronic Goods, Fruit and Vegetables, Instruments, Machinery, Motor Vehicles, Petroleum Products, Soya Beans, Small Metal Manufactures, Textiles, Tobacco.

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**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; route length 225,000 km (139,808 mi) (1991), passenger-km 22,043,000,000 (13,697,000,000 passenger-mi) (1991), cargo ton-km 1,573,880,000,000 (1,077,950,000,000 short ton-mi) (1991). Roads; length 6,257,882 km (3,888,466 mi) (1991). Vehicles; cars 142,955,623 (1991), trucks and buses 45,416,312 (1991). Merchant Marine; vessels 5,710 (1992), deadweight tonnage 25,646,378 (1992). Air Transport; passenger-km 794,901,000,000 (493,928,000,000 passenger-mi) (1992), cargo ton-km 22,381,000,000 (15,329,000,000 short ton-mi) (1992).

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; total of 1,710 with a total circulation of 62,000,000 (1995). Radio; receivers 538,000,000 (1993). Television; receivers 211,000,000 (1994). Telephones; lines 147,000,000 (1993).

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**MILITARY:** 1,547,300 (1995) total active duty personnel with 33.9% army, 28.6% navy, 11.1% marines and 26.4% air force while military expenditure accounts for 4.7% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).