

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Panama
CAPITAL: Panama City
SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Multiparty Republic
AREA: 77,046 Sq Km (29,748 Sq Mi)
ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 2,882,000



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Panama is located on the Isthmus of Panama in Central America. It is bound by the Caribbean Sea to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the south, Costa Rica to the west and Colombia to the east. The country is divided into five geographical regions. (1.) Darien which comprises 33% of the land area and is mostly underdeveloped and underpopulated. (2.) The Central Isthmus which is a low seat of land that bisects the Isthmus at the Canal zone. (3.) Central Panama which lies between the Continental Divide and the Pacific Ocean. (4.) Chiriqui which includes the hills of the Las Palmas Peninsula and the Pacific side of the Cordillera Central and (5.) Atlantic Panama which includes the Atlantic side of the Continental Divide, west of the Central Isthmus. The country has over 500 rivers with the largest being the Tuira and Bayano or Chepo. Major Cities (pop. est.); Panama City 450,700, San Miguel 293,600, David 69,700, Colon 57,900 (1993). Land Use; forested 44%, pastures 20%, agricultural-cultivated 9%, other 27% (1993).

CLIMATE: Panama has a tropical climate with little seasonal variation. The rainy season is from April to December and humidity is around 80% all year round. The prevailing winds are the northerlies and north easterlies throughout most of the year and the south westerlies during Autumn. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,780 mm (70 inches) to 2,540 (100 inches) depending on the region. Average temperature ranges in Colon are from 22 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit) to 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit).

PEOPLE: Around 60% of the population are Mestizos, also called Panamenos, who are of mixed AmerIndian and Spanish descent. The remainder are Antillean Negroes and Mulattoes who account for 20% of the population, while Whites account for 10% and full-blooded AmerIndians for 8% which include the Guayami, Choco and Cuna.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 33 persons per sq km (85 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 53.4% urban, 46.6% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 50.5% male, 49.5% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 70.2 years male, 74.1 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 35% under 15, 30% 15 to 29, 18% 30 to 44, 10% 45 to 59, 5% 60 to 74, 2% 75 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 25.5 per 1,000 (1992). Death Rate; 5.2 per 1,000 (1992). Increase Rate; 20.3 per 1,000 (1992). Infant Mortality Rate; 21.3 per 1,000 live births (1991).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians with 84% of the population Roman Catholic while 5% are Protestant. The principal religious minority are Muslims which constitute around 5% of the population.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Spanish which is also the national language while English is also widely understood.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 17.4%, incomplete primary 27.3%, primary 23.4%, secondary 23.5%, higher 8.4% (1980). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 1,385,000 or 88.1% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: Many Panamanians opposed US control of the Panama Canal and in 1959 there were demonstrations in protest to the US flag being flown in the Canal zone. In 1968 the "Supreme leader of the Panamanian Revolution", Col. Omar Torrijos Herrera banned political parties and introduced a number of social reforms. Col. Torrijos also negotiated two new Panama Canal Treaties that allowed for a transition of jurisdiction by the year 2000 while the US retained the right for military intervention to keep the Canal open if necessary. In 1978 political parties were again legalized in preparation for a civilian government. In July 1981 Col. Torrijos was killed in a plane crash believed to be engineered by Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega Morena. In May 1984 Nicolas Ardito Barletta was elected President and resigned in Sept 1985. Pres. Ardito was replaced by Eric Arturo Delvalle who in turn was replaced by Manuel Solis Palma after an abortive attempt to dismiss Gen. Noriega who had been indicted by the US on drug related charges. In May 1989 disputed presidential elections were annulled by Gen. Noriega on the grounds of international interference and in Oct. 1989 a coup attempt to oust Noriega failed. In Nov. 1989 Noriega was declared the Maximum Leader by the National Assembly. On Dec. 20, 1989 the US invaded Panama and Guillermo Endara Galimany, the candidate said to have won the 1989 elections, was installed as the "Constitution President". On Jan 3, 1990 Gen. Noriega surrendered to US troops and was flown to the US to await trial. In Dec 1990 US troops were called in to end a rebel uprising. In 1991 Pres. Endara alleged that the Christian Democrats, partners of the four-party center-right ruling coalition, were importing arms and organizing an intelligence network which resulted in a Cabinet reshuffle with five Christian Democrat ministers being replaced. In June 1991 there were strikes and demonstrations by students protesting against government policies and price increases, and some 2,000 demonstrators took to the streets in Panama City demanding compensation for the families of 4,000 people killed during the 1989 US invasion. In July 1991 the Congress approved a Legal Assistance Agreement which allowed for greater US access to banking information on drug traffickers. Also in 1991 there were marked increases in corruption and record seizures of cocaine while it was alleged that Pres. Endara's law firm was linked with several companies owned by US-Cuban drug traffickers. In 1992 Pres. Endara announced the establishment of a new anti-terrorist group called the Elite Tactical Weapons Unit (ETWA) to combat rising crime and protect the

government. On Feb. 7, 1992 Pres. Endara announced that the ETWA had foiled a planned coup and also in Feb. 1992 the US Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney visited Panama to inspect US military bases. In June 1992 US Pres. George Bush visited Panama amidst demonstrations by thousands of people angry over unfulfilled US promises of reparation and reconstruction following their 1989 invasion. The protesters were involved in several violent attacks on the US military and were later dispersed by the police using tear gas. On Nov. 15, 1992 a national referendum on government reforms including the abolishment of the armed forces resulted a 64% "no" vote. Also in 1992 there were growing demands for a referendum on the Panama Canal Treaty in which the US control of the canal was to be returned to Panama in 1999, with the majority of the population supporting the continuation of the US military presence fearing that thousands of jobs would be lost if they were removed. In Jan. 1993 politicians demanded stronger measures and penalties to combat rising armed robbery and murder. On Feb. 19, 1993 Pres. Endara signed the Belize Declaration which attempted to limit the trafficking of drugs in Central America. In April 1993 proposed amnesty legislation for political prisoners caused deep rifts within the government. In Sept. 1993 seven people accused of the murder of Hugo Spadafora, a former Noriega opponent were acquitted that lead to five days of protest, although in Oct. 1993 Noreiga and two former soldiers were found guilty of the murder. Also in 1993 the government experience protests from six indigenous groups demanding title to their land and also several strikes by transport, agriculture and civil-service workers.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Balboa (B) divided into 100 Centisimos. Additionally, US currency is also accepted as a legal tender

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$6,621,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$3,709,000,000 (1993). Imports; B 2,187,000,000 (1993). Exports; B 508,000,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$207,000,000 (1992). Balance of Trade; B -1,594,100,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 858,509 or 34.8% of total population (1991). Unemployed; 12.0% (1994).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA, Venezuela, Japan and Germany.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Bananas, Cattle, Coffee, Maize, Rice, Shrimps, Sugar Cane, Timber.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Cement, Clothing, Construction, Financial Services, Food Processing, Forestry, Furniture, Metal Working, Petroleum Refining.

MAIN EXPORTS: Bananas, Coffee, Petroleum Products, Shrimps, Sugar.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 240 km (149 mi) (1989), passenger-km N/A., cargo ton-km N/A. Roads; length 9,690 km (6,021 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 176,708 (1989), trucks and buses 49,169 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 4,748 (1990), deadweight tonnage 62,183,949 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 332,353,000 (206,515,000 passenger-mi) (1987), cargo ton-km 8,013,000 (5,488,000 short ton-mi) (1987).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 8 with a total circulation of 223,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 527,000 (1994). Television; receivers 204,539 (1994). Telephones; units 261,500 (1993).

MILITARY: 11,000 (1994) total active national police as well as 7,100 US duty personnel while military expenditure accounts for 3.4% (1989) of the Gross National Product (GNP).