Background Note: Cote d'Ivoire

PROFILE

OFFICIAL NAME:
Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

Geography
Area: 322,500 sq. km. (124,500 sq. mi.); slightly larger than New Mexico.
Cities: Principal city--Abidjan (economic capital, de facto political capital). Capital--Yamoussoukro, Gagnoa, Korhogo, Man, San Pedro.
Terrain: Forested, undulating, hilly in the west.
Climate: Tropical.

People
Nationality: Noun and adjective--Ivoirian(s).
Population (2004 est.): 18,700,000.
Annual growth rate: 3.8%, with immigration.
Ethnic groups: More than 60.
Religions: Indigenous 10%-20%, Muslim 35%-40%, and Christian (Catholic, Protestant and other).
Languages: French (official); five principal language groups.
Education: Years compulsory--school is not compulsory at this time. Attendance--57%. Literacy--Health: Infant mortality rate--111/1,000. Life expectancy--46 years.

Government
Type: Republic.
Branches: Executive--president (chief of state and head of government). Legislative--unicameral (3 chambers: judicial, administrative, auditing); Constitutional Council.
Administrative subdivisions: 19 regions, 58 departments, 196 communes.
Political parties: Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI), Ra Union pour la Democratie et pour la Paix en Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI), numerous other smaller political.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy
GDP (2005 est.): $15.9 billion.
Annual real growth rate (2005 est.): 0.8%. Real GDP declined by 3.8% in 2003 and rose by 1.6%
Natural resources: Petroleum (offshore) discovered in 1977, production began in 1980; output in mining began in early 1990s.
Services (2004): 52% of GDP.
Trade (2004): Exports (41% of GDP)—cocoa, coffee, timber, rubber, cotton, palm oil, pineapples, Germany, Netherlands. Total imports (28% of GDP; U.S. imports, in 2003 $113.6 million)—consu
capital goods. Major suppliers—France, Nigeria, Italy, U.S., Germany.

PEOPLE
Cote d'Ivoire has more than 60 ethnic groups, usually classified into five principal divisions: Akan (of the southeast), Krou (southwest), Southern Mande (west), Northern Mande (northwest), Seno Baoules, in the Akan division, probably comprise the single largest subgroup with 15%-20% of the
t region around Bouake and Yamoussoukro. The Betes in the Krou division, the Senoufos in the n the cities are the next largest groups, with 10%-15% each of the national population. Most of the presence in neighboring countries.

Of the more than 5 million non-Ivoirian Africans living in Cote d'Ivoire, one-third to one-half are from Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, Liberia, and Mauritania. The non-African expatriate comm possibly 100,000 Lebanese. As of mid-November 2004, thousands of expatriates, African and non of d'Ivoire. The number of elementary school-aged children attending classes increased from 22%

HISTORY
The early history of Cote d'Ivoire is virtually unknown, although it is thought that a Neolithic cultu Cote d'Ivoire in 1637, when missionaries landed at Assinée near the Gold Coast (now Ghana) to missionar because of the inhospitable coastline and settlers’ fear of the inhabitants.

In the 18th century, the country was invaded from present-day Ghana by two related Akan group and the Baoules, who settled in the central section. In 1843-44, Admiral Bouet-Williaumez signet and Assinie regions, placing their territories under a French protectorate. French explorers, miss gradually extended the area under French control inland from the lagoon region. However, comp 1915.

French Period
Cote d'Ivoire officially became a French colony in 1893. Captain Binger, who had explored the G governor. He negotiated boundary treaties with Liberia and the United Kingdom (for the Gold Co Almany Samory, a Malinke chief, who fought against the French until 1898.

From 1904 to 1958, Cote d'Ivoire was a constituent unit of the Federation of French West Africa, under the French Third Republic. Until the period following World War II, governmental affairs in Paris. France's policy in West Africa was reflected mainly in its philosophy of "association," mean officially French "subjects" without rights to citizenship or representation in Africa or France.

During World War II, France's Vichy regime remained in control until 1943, when members of Ge government assumed control of all French West Africa. The Brazzaville Conference in 1944, the Fourth Republic in 1946, and France's gratitude for African loyalty during World War II led to far- French citizenship was granted to all African "subjects," the right to organize politically was recoh abolished.

A turning point in relations with France was reached with the 1956 Overseas Reform Act (Loi Ca from Paris to elected territorial governments in French West Africa and also removed remaining

Independence
In December 1958, Cote d'Ivoire became an autonomous republic within the French community; community status to all members of the old Federation of French West Africa except Guinea, wh d'Ivoire became independent on August 7, 1960, and permitted its community membership to lap

Cote d'Ivoire's contemporary political history is closely associated with the career of Félix Houphouet-Boigny first came to political prominence in 1944 as founder of the Syndicat Agricole conditions for African farmers and formed a nucleus for the PDCI. After World War II, he was ele Constituent Assembly. Representing Cote d'Ivoire in the French National Assembly from 1946 to territorial political organization and further amelioration of labor conditions. After his 13-year serv
including almost 3 years as a minister in the French Government, he became Cote d'Ivoire's first following year was elected its first President.

In May 1959, Houphouet-Boigny reinforced his position as a dominant figure in West Africa by le (Burkina), and Dahomey (Benin) into the Council of the Entente, a regional organization promotir the road to African solidarity was through step-by-step economic and political cooperation, r the internal affairs of other African states.

1999 Coup and Aftermath
In a region where many political systems are unstable, Cote d'Ivoire showed remarkable political in 1960 until late 1999. Under Felix Houphouet-Boigny, President from independence until his de maintained a close political allegiance to the West while many countries in the region were undei with Marxism, and developing ties with the Soviet Union and China. His successor, President He having served as Cote d'Ivoire's first ambassador to the U.S. Falling world market prices for Cot coffee put pressure on the economy and the Bedie presidency. Government corruption and misn aid in 1998 and 1999, and eventually to the country's first coup on December 24, 1999.

Following the bloodless coup, General Guei formed a government of national unity and promise drafted and ratified by the population in the summer of 2000. It retained clauses that underscore Christian and Muslim, that had been growing since Houphouet's death.

Elections were scheduled for fall 2000, but when the general's handpicked Supreme Court disqu parties--the PDCI and Rassemblement des Republicaines (RDR)--Western election support and a boycott, setting the stage for low election turnout in a race between Guie and Front Populaire ! When early polling results showed Gbagbo in the lead, Guei stopped the process--claiming pollir and declared himself the winner. Within hours Gbagbo supporters took to the streets of Abidjan, the guards protecting the presidential palace. Many gendarmes and soldiers joined the fight agai Having gained the most votes, Gbagbo was declared President. The RDR then took the streets, Supreme Court had declared their presidential candidate and all the candidates of the PDCI ineli to the new government joined the FPI youth to attack RDR demonstrators. Hundreds were killed party leader Alassane Ouattara called for peace and recognized the Gbagbo presidency.

2001 Attempted Coup
On January 7, 2001, another coup attempt shattered the temporary calm. However, some weeks were conducted without violence and with the full participation of all political parties. The RDR, w legislative elections, won the most local seats, followed by the PDCI and FPI. Some economic ai by the summer of 2001, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) re-engaged the government. abuses by the government during the presidential and legislative elections of 2000 remain unres day-to-day life began to return to normal. In August 2002, President Gbagbo formed a de facto g RDR party.

2002 Country Divides
On September 19, 2002, rebellious exiled military personnel and co-conspirators in Abidjan simu and government and military/security facilities in Abidjan, Bouake, and Korhogo. In Abidjan, goe within hours, but the attacks resulted in the deaths of Minister of Interior Emile Boga Doudou anc General Guei was killed under still-unclear circumstances. Almost immediately after the coup att aggressive security operation in Abidjan, whereby shantytowns--occupied by thousands of immig weapons and rebels. Government security forces burned down or demolished a number of these people.

The failed coup attempt quickly evolved into a rebellion, splitting the country in two and escalatin independence in 1960. The rebel group, calling itself the "Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire" (M Korhogo, and within 2 weeks moved to take the remainder of the northern half of the country. In representatives signed a ceasefire and French military forces already present in the country agre November 2002, the western part of the country became a new military front with the emergence Movement for the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP). MPIGO three groups subsequently called themselves the "New Forces." In January 2003, the Economic (ECOWAS) placed approximately 1,500 peacekeeping troops from five countries--Senegal (com the ground beside the 4,000 French peacekeepers. The troops maintained the east-west ceasefi

Reunification Attempts
In late January 2003, the country's major political parties and the New Forces signed the French-
agreeing to a power-sharing national reconciliation government to include rebel New Forces rep

together on modifying national identity, eligibility for citizenship, and land tenure laws which man

d the conflict. The LMA also stipulated a UN Monitoring Committee to report on implementation of

Gbagbo appointed Seydou Diarra as the consensus Prime Minister. In March 2003, Prime Minist

reconciliation of 41 ministers. The full government did not meet until mid-April, when UN peaceke

security for rebel New Forces ministers. On July 4, 2003, the government and New Forces milita

recognized President Gbagbo's authority, and vowed to work for the implementation of the LMA

Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR). On September 13, 2003, six months after the formation

Gbagbo named politically neutral Defense and Security Ministers, after consulting with the politic

2004 saw serious challenges to the Linas-Marcoussis Accord. Violent flare-ups and political dea

Accra III talks in Ghana. Signed on July 30, 2004, the Accra III Agreement reaffirmed the goals o

not met by the parties. The ensuing political and military deadlock was not broken until Novembe

bomber targets in the north. On November 6, a government aircraft bombed nine French soldiers and one American civilian. Claiming that the attack was deliberate (the Ivor

French forces retaliated by destroying most of the small Ivoirian air force. Mayhem ensued for se

Abidjan and violence flared elsewhere. On November 15, 2004 the United Nations Security Cour

Cote d'Ivoire and gave leaders one month to get the peace process back on track or face a trave

2005, South African President Thabo Mbeki invited the leaders to South Africa for an African Uni

was the Pretoria Agreement, signed April 6, 2005. The Pretoria Agreement formally ended the cr

such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, the return of New Forces Ministers to ç

Independent Electoral Commission. A follow-up agreement in June 2005 laid out another frame

adoption of legislation required under the Linas-Marcoussis Accord. In September, the governme

scheduled for October 30, 2005. In October, the UN Security Council endorsed an African Union

peace process for an additional 12 months. A new Prime Minister, Charles Konan Banny, and ne

Protests mounted by militias loyal to President Gbagbo in January 2006 threatened the independe

of the African Union's International Working Group to oversee the peace process.

Elections are to occur no later than October 31, 2006.

GOVERNMENT

Cote d'Ivoire's constitution of the Second Republic (2000) provides for a strong presidency within

The executive is personified in the president, elected for a 5-year term. The president is the hea

armed forces, may negotiate and ratify certain treaties, and may submit a bill to a national refere

to the constitution, the president of the National Assembly assumes the presidency for 45-90 da

new elections in which the winner completes the remainder of the deceased president's term. Th

the head of government. The cabinet is selected by and is responsible to the prime minister.

The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 225 members elected by direct universal suff

president. It passes on legislation typically introduced by the president, although it also can intro

The judicial system culminates in the Supreme Court. The High Court of Justice is competent to

There is also an independent Constitutional Council which has seven members appointed by the

the determination of candidate eligibility in presidential and legislative elections, the announceme

referendums, and the constitutionality of legislation.

For administrative purposes, Cote d'Ivoire is divided into 19 regions and 58 departments. Each r

appointed by the central government. In 2002, the country held its first departmental elections to

infrastructure development and maintenance as well as economic and social development plans

each headed by an elected mayor, plus the city of Abidjan with 10 mayors.

Principal Government Officials

President—Laurent Gbagbo
Prime Minister—Charles Konan Banny
Foreign Minister—Youssef Bakayoko
Ambassador to the U.S.—Daouda Diabate
Ambassador to the UN—Philippe Djessan Djangone-Bi

Cote d'Ivoire maintains an embassy at 3421 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 2000

POLITICAL CONDITIONS
Laurent Gbagbo has been President since October 26, 2000. Gbagbo took power following a poll after junta leader Gen. Robert Guei claimed a dubious victory in the 2000 presidential elections. December 25, 1999, following a military coup d’etat against the government of former President and 2002 escalated into a rebellion and crisis which culminated in the January 2003 signing of a reconciliation government. Implementation of the 2003 accord has made halting progress, and C occupying the northern half of the country. French Licorne and UNOCI peacekeeping troops poli and New Forces positions.

Cote d'Ivoire's relations with the U.S. have traditionally been excellent, but have been somewhat curtailed nonhumanitarian aid following the December 1999 military coup. The restrictions were questionable governmental interference before and during the election.

Looking toward the country's future, the fundamental issue is whether its political system followin for enduring stability, which is critical for investor confidence and further economic development. president-dominated. The prime minister concentrates principally on coordinating and implement political, military, or economic--continue to be made by the president.

However, political dialogue is much freer today than prior to 1990, especially due to the oppositic regime. Beginning in 1990, Cote d'Ivoire evolved, with relatively little violence or dislocation, fron independent newspapers, and independent trade unions were made legal at that time. Since tho pace of political change had been slow, prior to the period of turmoil ushered in by the Decembe

Whether further democratic reform will take place, adequate to meet future challenges, is unkno business environment is one in which personal contact and connections remain important, where and where the legislative and judicial branches of the government remain weak. The political sys president stepping out of his role as ruling party leader, while attempting to decentralize many le promised less executive interference in the judicial system, but it still lacks basic strength and inc

Cote d'Ivoire has a high population growth rate, a high crime rate (particularly in Abidjan), a high sporadic student unrest, a differential rate of in-country development according to region, and a c and tribe. These factors put stress on the political system and could become more of a problem i implementing the reforms enshrined in the 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accord and if the economy dc

Political Parties
The Ivoirian constitution affords the legislature some independence, but it has not been widely ex the PDCI. The December 2000 National Assembly election was marred by violence, irregularities because of the RDR boycott of the election to protest the invalidation of the candidacy of party p rate was only 33%. In addition, the election could not take place in 26 electoral districts in the no places, burned ballots, and threatened the security of election officials. Following the legislative t seats of the National Assembly were filled. The FPI held 96 seats, the PDCI 94 seats, the PIT 4 candidates 22 seats, and the RDR--in spite of its boycott of the legislative elections--5 seats.

Until it took the reins of government in the 2000 elections, the FPI party was the oldest opposition coloration but one which was more concerned with democratic reform than radical economic cha (southwest) of President Laurent Gbagbo. The PDCI's "core" region may be described as the ter country's center and east, home of both Houphouet-Boigny and Bedie; however, the PDCI is rep members of the PDCI's reformist wing formed the originally non-ideological RDR in September 1 Alassane Ouattara would run and prevail in the 1995 presidential election, but Ouattara was sub legislation requiring 5-year residency. The RDR is now strongest in the mostly Muslim north.

The FPI and RDR boycotted the presidential election of October 1995 because of Ouattara's dis independent electoral commission, among other grievances. Their "active boycott" produced a c arrests, with a number of those arrested not tried for 2-1/2 years. These grievances remained un leading to the 1999 coup and 2002 rebellion.

ECONOMY
The Ivoirian economy is largely market-based and depends heavily on the agricultural sector. Be are engaged in some form of agricultural activity. The economy performed poorly in the 1980s ar coupled with economic decline resulted in a steady fall in living standards. Gross national produc to $669 by 2003. (It was substantially higher two decades ago.) A majority of the population rem production. Principal exports are cocoa, coffee, cotton, pineapples, tuna, and tropical woods. Pri materials and resins, kraft paper, agricultural chemicals, telecommunications, and oil and gas eq
and cocoa products, petroleum, rubber, and coffee.

**Foreign Direct Investment Statistics**

Direct foreign investment plays a key role in the Ivorian economy, accounting for between 40% and 60% of the total stock of foreign investment. France is overwhelmingly the most important foreign investor. In recent years, French investment has dropped sharply due to the November 2004 crisis—based on U.S. curriculum and several excellent schools. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc helped return Côte d'Ivoire to rapid economic growth until 1997 G-7 decision to include Côte d'Ivoire in the IMF-World Bank debt forgiveness initiative for high-income countries. With the economic improvement, Côte d'Ivoire began turning the corner on its daunting debt load and has continued with the economic slowdown of the last several years. The consumer price index dropped sharply due to the November 2004 crisis—based on U.S. curriculum and several excellent schools. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc helped return Côte d'Ivoire to rapid economic growth until 1997 G-7 decision to include Côte d'Ivoire in the IMF-World Bank debt forgiveness initiative for high-income countries. With the economic improvement, Côte d'Ivoire began turning the corner on its daunting debt load and has continued with the economic slowdown of the last several years. The consumer price index dropped sharply due to the November 2004 crisis—based on U.S. curriculum and several excellent schools. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc helped return Côte d'Ivoire to rapid economic growth until 1997 G-7 decision to include Côte d'Ivoire in the IMF-World Bank debt forgiveness initiative for high-income countries. With the economic improvement, Côte d'Ivoire began turning the corner on its daunting debt load and has continued with the economic slowdown of the last several years. The consumer price index dropped sharply due to the November 2004 crisis—based on U.S. curriculum and several excellent schools. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc helped return Côte d'Ivoire to rapid economic growth until 1997 G-7 decision to include Côte d'Ivoire in the IMF-World Bank debt forgiveness initiative for high-income countries. With the economic improvement, Côte d'Ivoire began turning the corner on its daunting debt load and has continued with the economic slowdown of the last several years. The consumer price index dropped sharply due to the November 2004 crisis—based on U.S. curriculum and several excellent schools.
the country into five military regions no longer exists. The 20,000-man Ivoirian armed forces (for
and Security Forces--FDS) include an army, navy, air force, gendarmerie, and specialized forces
headquarters in Abidjan.

The gendarmerie is roughly equivalent in size to the army. It is a national police force which is re
rural areas. In times of national crisis the gendarmerie could be used to reinforce the army. The gi
general.

Cote d'Ivoire has a brown-water navy whose mission is coastal surveillance and security for the ra
attack craft, two patrol crafts, and one light transport ship. It also has numerous smaller vessels u
within the lagoon system.

The Ivoirian Air Force’s mission is to defend the nation’s airspace and provide transportation su
are at least 5 Alpha jets, 12 transport/utility aircraft, and 2 helicopters, though additional aircraft v

coup attempt/mutiny. (As noted above, in response to an FDS attack on a French base in Bouak peacekeeping troops destroyed many of these aircraft.)

A mutual defense accord signed with France in 1961 provides for the stationing of French forces
Battalion is based in Port Bouet adjacent to the Abidjan Airport. Shortly after the beginning of ho
established a stabilization force, currently approximately 4,000 troops, under “Operation Licorne. troops stationed in Cote d’Ivoire. In January 2003, the Economic Community of West African Sta peacekeeping troops from five countries–Senegal (commander), Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Niger peacekeepers. The troops maintained the east-west ceasefire line dividing the country. On April UN Operation in Cote d’Ivoire (UNOCI) which was authorized under UN Security Council Resolu

FOREIGN RELATIONS
Throughout the Cold War, Cote d'Ivoire's foreign policy was generally favorable toward the West Nations in 1960 and participates in most of its specialized agencies. It maintains a wide variety o South Africa through dialogue and was the first country accredited to post-apartheid South Africa reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.

France remains Cote d'Ivoire's single most important foreign partner. President Houphouet-Boign Government prior to independence, insisted that the connection with France remain strong. Cont are numerous: French is Cote d'Ivoire's official language; Cote d'Ivoire adopted the French legal stationed in Abidjan augmented security; thousands of French expatriates continue to work and l currency is tied to the euro. However, the September 2002 events injected strain into the relation France for its perceived failure to uphold its commitment under the 1961 mutual defense treaty b held areas. However, the French did send additional forces--reaching a total of around 4,000 trox line between regular government and rebel forces. The French contingent was joined by a force ECOWAS that totaled over 3,000 as of fall 2003. Anti-French riots erupted in Abidjan in late Jan. relations subsequently improved amidst ongoing French military and diplomatic efforts to promot 2004, Cote d'Ivoire joined the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CENSAD).

The Ivoirian Government has traditionally played a constructive role in Africa. President Houpho regional disputes, most notably in Liberia and Angola, and had considerable stature throughout t medical unit to participate in regional peacekeeping in Liberia, its first peacekeeping effort. Cote regional peacekeeping efforts were derailed by the December 1999 coup. Still a regional econ its place in promoting regional stability when the resolution of its current crisis permits.

Cote d'Ivoire belongs to the UN and most of its specialized agencies; the African Union; West Af ECOWAS; African Mauritan Common Organization; Council of Entente Communautaire Financiere Agreement; Nonaligned Movement; African Regional Satellite Organization; InterAfrican Coffee ( Organization; Alliance of Cocoa Producers; African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries; and Assoc d’Ivoire also belongs to the European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank; it is a

U.S.-IVOIRIAN RELATIONS
U.S.-Ivoirian relations have traditionally been friendly and close. Some strain has resulted from th nonhumanitarian aid imposed on Cote d'Ivoire following the December 1999 coup. Because of It presidential elections, the Section 508 restrictions were not lifted. New elections are scheduled ir international effort to assist Cote d'Ivoire in overcoming its current crisis, providing assistance--to
ECOWAS contingent helping to maintain the ceasefire. The U.S. is sympathetic to Cote d'Ivoire's development as well as its moderate stance on international issues. Bilateral U.S. Agency for Int exception of self-help and democratization funds, has been phased out, although Cote d'Ivoire continue programs. The country remains a major beneficiary of U.S. assistance in combating HIV/AIDS, a large regional program in Abidjan. Ivorian eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) legislation resulted from the 2002 rebellion.

The U.S. and Cote d'Ivoire maintain an active cultural exchange program, through which prominent representatives, educators, and scholars visit the U.S. to become better acquainted with the American culture and views with their American colleagues. This cooperative effort is furthered through frequent visits of prominent business and educational institutions, and by visits of Fulbright-Hays scholars and specialists in the arts. An American compound opened in July 2005.

A modest security assistance program that provides professional training for Ivorian military officers. The program will be phased out by 2008.

Principal U.S. Officials
Ambassador--Aubrey Hooks
Deputy Chief of Mission--Vincent Valle
Management Counselor--Robert Yamate
Political/Economic Counselor--James Wojtasiewicz
Economic Officer--Andrea Lewis
Consular Affairs Officer--Peter Thompson
Defense Attaché--COL Peter Aubrey
Public Affairs Officer--David Andresen

The U.S. Embassy is located at Riveria Golf, Cocody, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (tel. 225. 22-49-4001; B.P. 1712, Abidjan 01, Cote d'Ivoire.

TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION
The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Program provides Consular Information, Announcements. Consular Information Sheets exist for all countries and include information on health conditions, areas of instability, crime and security, political disturbances, and the address of the nearest American presence. Warnings are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid travel to a country or territory due to significant risks to the security of American travelers. Free copies of these materials are available in the U.S. Information office. Consular Information Sheets are also available online on the Consular Affairs Internet home page: Consular Affairs Tips for Travelers provide information on the latest health information with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The National Passport Information Center is the single, centralized source for information. Telephone: 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778). Customer service representatives are available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, excluding federal holidays.

Travelers can check the latest health information with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 877-FYI-TRIP (877-394-8747) and a web site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm give the most up-to-date recommendations or requirements, and advice on food and drinking water safety for regions and countries. Information for International Travel (HHS publication number CDC-95-8280) is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, telephone: (202) 512-1800. For after-hours emergencies, Sundays and holidays, call 202-647-4000.

Emergency information concerning Americans traveling abroad may be obtained from the Office of Consular Affairs. The National Passport Information Center (NPIC) is the U.S. Department of State's single, centralized source for information. Telephone: 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778). Customer service representatives are available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, excluding federal holidays.

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Information on travel conditions, visa requirements, currency and customs regulations, legal and cultural norms, may be obtained before your departure from a country's embassy and/or consulates in the country (see the "U.S. Government Officials" listing in this publication).

U.S. citizens who are long-term visitors or traveling in dangerous areas are encouraged to register travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov or at the Consular section of the embassy or consulate. They may help family members or U.S. officials reach them in case of an emergency.
Further Electronic Information

Department of State Web Site. Available on the Internet at http://www.state.gov, the Department provides access to official U.S. foreign policy information, including Background Notes and daily press briefing of Foreign Service posts and more.

Export.gov provides a portal to all export-related assistance and market information offered by the leads, free export counseling, help with the export process, and more.

STAT-USA/Internet, a service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, provides authoritative economic information from the Federal government. The site includes current and historical trade-related opportunities, and country analysis and provides access to the National Trade Data Bank.