

Marshall Islands

Overview:

After almost four decades under US administration as the easternmost part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Marshall Islands attained independence in 1986 under a Compact of Free Association. Compensation claims continue as a result of US nuclear testing on some of the atolls between 1947 and 1962. The Marshall Islands hosts the US Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA) Reagan Missile Test Site, a key installation in the US missile defense network.

Territory:

Two archipelagic island chains of 30 atolls and 1 152 islands. Land: 181.3 sq. km. Water: 0 sq. km (fresh water); Total: 181.3 sq. km; Coastline: 370.4 km; Highest Point: unnamed location on Likiep 10 m.

Location:

Oceania, island group in the North Pacific Ocean.

Latitude and Longitude:

9 00N 168 00 W. Day light savings is not observed.

Time Zone:

GMT +12

Total Land Area:

181

EEZ:

Climate:

Tropical; hot and humid; wet season from May to November; islands border typhoon belt.

Natural Resources:

Coconut products, marine products, deep seabed minerals.

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2001	115,000,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
2001	1,990.00 USD

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2000	14%	16%	70%

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2000	21.4%	20.9%	57.7%

External Aid/Remittances:

more than \$1 billion from the US, 1986-2002.

Growth:

n/a

Labour Force:	
1999	28,698

Unemployment	
Year:	Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)
1999	30.9%

Industry:

copra, fish, tourism, craft items from shell, wood, and pearls.

Niche Industry:

pearls, fishing, tourism.

Tourism:

Imports and Exports:	
Tot. Value of Imports	0.00 ()
From Eu:	
Import Partners (EU:)	
Partners Outside EU:	
Import Partners:	
Tot. Value of Exports	()
To Eu:	
Export Partners:	
Partners Outside EU::	
Export Partners:	
Main Imports:	
Main Exports:	

TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS**External:****Number of Airports:** 35

Thirty-five airfields have been allocated an IATA three-letter code, including U.S. military fields. These fields service two (Ratak and Ralik) archipelagic island chains of thirty atolls comprising almost 1,200 islands. Most airfields are unpaved, have minimal or no facilities, and are suitable only for operations by small aircraft. Four are paved. Majuro International and Kwajalein airports handle larger passenger jets. Regular international services are provided by Continental Air Micronesia (2002).

Number of Main Ports:**Internal:****Air**

Most airfields are unpaved, have minimal or no facilities, and are suitable only for operations by small aircraft.

Road:**Sea:****Other Forms of Transportation:****Economic Zones:**

territorial sea: 12 nm; exclusive economic zone: 200 nm;

Energy Policy:

Electricity: 63.4% of power is from electricity; 31% from kerosene; and 5.2% from solar energy. The price of kWh is totally dependent on the cost of imported diesel fuel. RMI stats 2004 enumerate the amount of users per island. Water: Rainwater is the dominant source of water for drinking. In Majuro, public water is available from the airport catchment and from a fresh water lens. In Ebeye, Bikini and Kili salt water is processed through reverse osmosis units. Salt water is also pumped and used for non-drinking purposes. The water company also operates sewage in Majuro. No statistics are available.

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)

Official Currency:

US Dollar (\$USD)

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:

Number of Insurance Companies:

Financial Services:

Several mainland banks have branches on the Marshall Islands with international connections, providing a wide range of financial services.



Communications/E-Commerce:

Open and outward. Websites and publications on economic data from both public and private institutions are available.

Public Ownership:

Land ownership is customary and is restricted to natural-born Marshallese citizens. Non-Marshallese may lease land on a long-term basis, but are precluded by law from land ownership. Land lease costs in the RMI range from a low of \$2,000 per acre for residential land to \$4,000 per acre for commercial purposes. Land can be leased in perpetuity, however, the mortgage on the land lease cannot exceed 50 years. In addition, mortgages can only be held against the lease on the land, not against the title to the land itself. The RMI recently established the Marshall Islands Development Land Registration Authority in an effort to facilitate public registration of land available for development.

Land Use:

(2001) arable land: 16.67%; permanent crops: 38.89%; other: 44.44%.

Agriculture/Forestry:

coconuts, tomatoes, melons, taro, breadfruit, fruits; pigs, chickens

Marine Activity:**Fishing:**

territorial sea: 12 nm; exclusive economic zone: 200 nm;

Marine Life:**Critical Issues:**

Inadequate supplies of potable water; pollution of Majuro lagoon from household waste and discharges from fishing vessels. Bikini and Enewetak are former US nuclear test sites; Kwajalein, the famous World War II battleground, is now used as a US missile test range. Pearl farming results in environmental damage.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES**Capital:**

name: Majuro, 7 05 N, 171 08 E.

Political System:

The government of the Marshall Islands operates under a mixed parliamentary- presidential system, which includes a head of state—the President, who is also the head of government—and a bicameral parliament—the Council of Iroij (the upper house) and Nitijela (the elected lower house). Executive: Executive power lies with the President, who is elected by the Nitijela, and the Presidential Cabinet. The President appoints cabinet ministers to leading positions in the government departments with the approval of the Nitijela. Legislative: Legislative power resides in the Nitijela, which consists of 33 senators elected by 24 electoral districts by universal suffrage of all citizens above 18 years of age. The electoral districts correspond roughly to each atoll of the Marshall Islands. Although no legal restrictions exist against the formation of political parties, no formal parties exist. Two ad hoc parties have existed since the mid 1990s. Council of Iroij: The Council of Iroij is comprised of 12 tribal chiefs who advise the Presidential Cabinet and review legislation affecting customary law or any traditional practice, including land tenure.

Political Parties:

Traditionally there have been no formally organized political parties; what has existed more closely resembles factions or interest groups because they do not have party headquarters, formal platforms, or party structures; the following two "groupings" have competed in legislative balloting in recent years - Kabua Party and United Democratic Party or UDP.

Important Legislation:

Constitution of the Republic of Marshall Islands. This document, created on 30 December 1988, outlines the governmental structures, powers, rights, and divisions of the RMI government and society. Compact of Free Association with the United States of America, signed on 21 October 1986 and the Amended Compact entered into force in May 2004, outlines the relationship between the RMI and the US. This association requires the US to provide certain services to RMI citizens, as well as administrate certain RMI governmental issues. The Protection of Resident Workers (Amendment) Act of 1990, which among other things requires the repatriation after two years of employment of non-resident workers (other than United States citizens). The Nonresident Worker (Fee) Act 1987, which requires employers to make quarterly contributions into a training fund for Marshallese in the amount of 25 cents per hour for work done by aliens (other than citizens of the United States and Palau). The Immigration and Emigration Act 1986, all non-citizens entering the Marshall Islands, with certain exceptions (e.g., diplomats and government workers), must have valid passports and entry permits (visas). Currently, business visitors and tourists receive a 30-day, free visa upon arrival. On request, the "visitor's" entry permit can be extended for another 60 days, or the "visitor's" entry permit can initially be issued for 90 days. Foreign investors and workers who intend to stay longer should obtain one-year visas. These visas are renewable for successive one-year terms. The one-year visas are to be obtained before entry into the Marshall Islands.

Principal Taxes:**Associated Power:**

Compact of Free Association with US

Citizenship:

US citizenship

Paradiplomacy:

ACP, AsDB, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICt, IDA, IFC, IMF, IMO, Interpol, ITU, OPCW, PIF, Sparteca, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, WHO

HUMAN RESOURCES

Population (2004): 57 738; Population by age and sex (2004): 0-14 years: 38.6% (male 11,347; female 10,934); 15-64 years: 58.7% (male 17,380; female 16,520); 65 years and over: 2.7% (male 748; female 809);

2004			
Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
	181	57,738	%

The Marshall Islands is preparing for a government Census in 2009. The most recent census is 1999.

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
2004	22281	0	0	0	1,557

Migration:
 Net Migration (2004): -6.04 migrant(s)/1,000 population;

Crude Birth Rate:	
2004	33.88%

Life Expedctancy:
 total population: 69.7 years; male: 67.77 years; female: 71.73 years;

Crude Death Rate:	
2004	4.94%

Ethnicity:
 Micronesian

Class Division:

Languages:
 English (widely spoken as a second language, both English and Marshallese are official languages), two major Marshallese dialects from the Malayo-Polynesian family, Japanese.

Religion:
 Christian (mostly Protestant)

Literacy:
 (1999): definition: age 15 and over can read and write total population: 93.7%; male: 93.6%; female: 93.7%.

Education System:
 Compulsory education remains as age 6 through 14 or completion of eighth grade. A high school entrance examination is administered to all eighth graders to determine the approximately 300 students who will be admitted to the two public high schools each year. During the 1994-95 school year, 15,755 students were enrolled in 115 public and non- public primary and secondary schools in the Marshall Islands. Additionally, approximately 1,200 preschool children, ages 4 and 5, were enrolled at 36 Head Start program sites. Public education consisted of 75 public primary schools, one middle school with grade eight, and two high schools, serving 10,384 students; non-public, government-supported education consisted of 26 primary schools and 10 high schools, serving 4,554 students. Fifty-one percent of all students were male, forty-nine percent were female. Today the College of the Marshall Islands serves a range of students from high school graduates pursuing associate degrees in nursing, education, business, architectural engineering, and liberal arts to high school and non-high school completers engaged in other vocational education courses, certificate programs, adult education programs, continuing education programs, high school drop out intervention programs, and enrichment programs.

Total Pre-schools:()	
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	
Second Level:	
Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	
Total Professional Schools	
Universities:	

Number of Schools per Island:										
	Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
	Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University
2005	0	10,281	3,018	0	0



Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			

Medical Services:

The people of the Marshall Islands face considerable challenges to maintain the health of its citizens. Recently, high population growth and crowded conditions in urban areas, have given rise to diseases, such as tuberculosis and leprosy. These conditions typically come about in rapid growth areas of the world that have limited economic and medical resources. In addition, exposure to the influence of Western culture has brought about a rise in the levels of adult obesity, non-communicable diseases, teenage pregnancy, suicide, and alcoholism, and tobacco use. The government of the Marshall Islands, along with the assistance of groups such as the World Health Organization, has identified and begun to effect solutions to the health care challenges that face the Marshalls. Future efforts will focus on the training native Marshallese health professionals, strengthening community health care programs, upgrading the quality of health care, and increasing the efficiency of the dissemination of health care information to the citizens of the Marshall Islands. Other health related issues that must be addressed include the need to reduce population growth and urban population densities, longstanding solutions to malnutrition and other conditions that plague the Marshalls.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

The first Micronesian navigators arrived in the Marshall Islands sometime between 500 and 2000 BC. Little is known of their origin or culture. The Marshalls were never united under a single leader, though one chief often controlled several atolls and at times an entire chain. Before the arrival of Europeans, the individual chiefs held absolute authority over their lands, and - living on such narrow stretches of land - their claims to their parcels were often hotly contested. The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas ceded ownership of all of Micronesia to Spain. The Marshalls, however, were off the main trade routes and consequently received little attention from early European explorers. In 1525, Alonso de Salazar of Spain became the first European to sight the islands, but Spain did nothing to colonise them. After another 200 years devoid of Europeans, the islands received a visit from English captain John Marshall (from whom they later took their name) in 1788. Russian explorer Otto von Kotzebue came through in the early 1800s and drew the first detailed maps of the islands. Traders and whalers began to visit the islands en masse in the early 1800s, until encounters with the 'friendly' native Marshallese began to turn sour. Ship after ship putting into port at various atolls in the Marshalls quickly weighed anchor after the death of their captain or crew members. Violence was on the decline when the first Protestant missionaries arrived in 1857, setting up churches and schools and gradually undermining the traditional authority of the island chiefs. Germany annexed the Marshalls in 1885 but didn't place government officials on the islands until 1906, leaving island affairs to a group of powerful German trading companies. Japan took over in 1914 and colonised the Marshalls extensively, developing and fortifying large bases on many of the islands. The first Micronesian islands captured by the Americans in WWII were at Kwajalein Atoll in 1944. Majuro Atoll was taken next and quickly developed into a base for aircraft carriers. Within weeks some 30 other islands had fallen. After the war, the Americans immediately began to test atomic bombs on Bikini and Enewetok atolls. (Kwajalein was later established as a missile testing site.) Chief Juda of Bikini was convinced to move his people - for the 'benefit of mankind' - to Rongerik Atoll, on the understanding that they'd be able to return to their homeland after the tests were over. A few months later, the USA exploded the first of the 23 nuclear devices that were to be detonated at the atoll, 500ft (150m) over its lagoon. The Bikinians nearly starved from inadequate food supplies on Rongerik, and two years later they were moved to Kwajalein Atoll and then to Kili Island. In the 1970s, they were told it was safe to return to Bikini, where they found two whole islands entirely blown away and most of the others treeless. Nevertheless, they stayed, and within a few years they were found to have dangerous levels of radiation in their bodies and were moved off the island again. In 1973 the Marshall Islands boldly withdrew from the Congress of Micronesia, seeking political independence. The move worked and, in 1979, the Marshalls' constitution became effective. Admission to the United Nations was achieved in 1991. Today, scientists from California's Lawrence Livermore Laboratory are using Bikini as a case study in ways to clean up radiation. So far, they've had some success with using potassium fertilizer to block the uptake of cesium in plants, but there are still long-term problems with eating anything grown on the island. Ironically, as the Bikini cleanup continues, the Marshallese government is considering the atoll as a possible dump site for commercial radioactive waste material produced by Asian and North American power plants. Meanwhile, the Marshalls were heavily hit by the effects of variations of the El Niño weather pattern in 1997 and 1998, receiving almost no rainfall. Drought affected most of the country's population, particularly on Majuro and Ebeye. The country seems set to remain dependent on US subsidies for the indefinite future. In December 2003 the two countries signed a Compact of Free Association, in which the Marshalls effectively became a US protectorate in exchange for payment of 3500000000.00 over 20 years. Meanwhile, it seems unlikely that Bikinians will receive the compensation awarded to them in 2001 by the Nuclear Claims Tribunal for the US atom-bomb tests that devastated their islands for many years. Culture and Social Structure: matrilineal society where family ties, extended system of family and mutual reciprocity are very strong.

Referenda:

Recent Significant Events:

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

Sources:

CIA World Factbook. 'Marshall Islands.' May 17, 2005. Available Online. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/rm.html>. May 2005 Department of the Interior; Office of Insular Affairs. Available online. <http://www.doi.gov/oi> ; Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (US Embassy). Available Online. <http://www.rmiembassyus.org/> May 2005. Lonely Planet. 'History of the Marshall Islands.' Available online. http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/pacific/marshall_islands/history.htm; OIA Statistics Online. Available online. <http://www.pacificweb.org/> ; Pacific Regional Information System (PRISM). Available online. <http://www.spc.int/prism/index.htm> ; Wotje Commercial Airport. Republic of the Marshall Islands: A Photo Essay, by O'Neill, Jon G. 2002. <http://marshall.csu.edu.au/Marshalls/html/O'Neill/WotjeAirport.html>. RMI Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO): http://www.spc.int/prism/country/mh/stats/EPPSO/eppso_index.htm. - 2007. Electricity, Water and Sewage: RMI Statistical Yearbook, 2004, pg. 291-300. [http://www.spc.int/prism/country/mh/stats/Utility/Chapter10\(Water&Energy\).pdf](http://www.spc.int/prism/country/mh/stats/Utility/Chapter10(Water&Energy).pdf).

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