

## SURINAME



**Suriname** U.S. foreign assistance to Suriname focuses on the following key goals: assisting the Government of Suriname to regulate its porous borders; promoting the rule of law; providing training for prosecutors, police, and judges; improving information-sharing between law enforcement agencies; providing non-lethal equipment to improve effectiveness and capabilities of law enforcement, the legal system, and the military; and professionalizing the military.

### **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Since gaining independence, Suriname has become a member of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Suriname is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market and the Association of Caribbean States; it is associated with the European Union through the Lome Convention. The Netherlands remains Suriname's biggest donor, but it has been surpassed by the U.S. as a trade partner. Suriname participates in the Amazonian Pact, a grouping of the countries of the Amazon Basin that focuses on protection of the Amazon region's natural resources from environmental degradation. Reflecting its status as a major bauxite producer, Suriname is also a member of the International Bauxite Association. The country also belongs to the Economic Commission for Latin America, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. In 2008, Suriname signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

At independence, Suriname signed an agreement with the Netherlands providing for about \$1.5 billion in development assistance grants and loans over a 10- to 15-year period. Initial disbursements amounted to about \$100 million per year, but were discontinued during military rule. After the return to a democratically elected government in 1991, Dutch aid resumed. The Dutch relationship continued to be an important factor in the economy, with the Dutch insisting that Suriname undertake economic reforms and produce specific plans acceptable to the Dutch for projects on which aid funds could be spent. In 2000, the Dutch revised the structure of their aid package and signaled to the Surinamese authorities their decision to disburse aid by sectoral priorities as opposed to individual projects. In 2001 both governments agreed to spend the remaining development funds to finance programs in 6 different sectors: health care, education, environment, agriculture, housing, and governance.

Bilateral cooperation agreements with several countries in the region have underscored the government's interest in strengthening regional ties. The return to Suriname from French Guiana of about 8,000 refugees from the 1986-91 Interior War between the military and domestic insurgents has improved relations with French authorities. Longstanding border disputes with Guyana and French Guiana remain unresolved. Negotiations with the Government of Guyana brokered by the Jamaican Prime Minister in 2000 did not produce an agreement, but the countries agreed to restart talks after Guyanese national elections in 2001. In January 2002, the presidents of Suriname and Guyana met in Suriname and agreed to resume negotiations, establishing the Suriname-Guyana border commission. In 2004 Guyana brought a complaint against Suriname under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regarding their maritime border dispute. In 2007, the UN International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) ruled that both Suriname and Guyana are entitled to their share of the disputed offshore basin which is believed to be rich in oil and gas deposits. Using the equidistance line, the tribunal awarded Suriname 6,900 sq. miles and Guyana 12,800 sq. miles of this basin. Suriname's earlier dispute with

Brazil ended amicably after formal demarcation of their shared border.

### **U.S.-SURINAMESE RELATIONS**

Since the reestablishment of a democratic, elected government in 1991, the United States has maintained positive and mutually beneficial relations with Suriname based on the principles of democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law, and civilian authority over the military. To further strengthen civil society and bolster democratic institutions, the U.S. has provided training to selected Surinamese military officers and policy leaders on appropriate roles for the military in civil society and other relevant topics. To assist Suriname in the fight against drugs and associated criminal activity, the U.S. has provided support to include training Surinamese anti-drug squads, police uniform patrol, military police, and customs officials. The U.S. and Suriname also have significant partnerships in fighting trafficking in persons and money laundering.

Since 2000, the U.S. has donated a criminal records database to the police as well as computers, vehicles, and radio equipment. Projects through which the U.S. has supported the judicial system include case management and computer hardware donations. Along with training projects, these programs have led to a strong relationship with law enforcement entities in Suriname. The United States also has worked with the Surinamese Ministries of Health, Education, and Defense to execute humanitarian engineering and health projects throughout the country.

Peace Corps Suriname works with the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Health, and local and national groups to encourage healthy lifestyles and sound business practices in the interior and districts of Suriname ([www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)).

Suriname is densely forested, and increased interest in large-scale commercial logging and mining in Suriname's interior have raised environmental concerns. The U.S. Forest Service, the Smithsonian, and numerous non-governmental environmental organizations have promoted technical cooperation with the Surinamese Government to prevent destruction of the country's tropical rain forest, one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world. U.S. experts have worked closely with local natural resource officials to encourage sustainable development of the interior and alternatives such as ecotourism. On December 1, 2000, UNESCO designated the 1.6 million hectare Central Suriname Nature Reserve a World Heritage site. Suriname's tourism sector remains a minor part of the economy, and tourist infrastructure is limited (in 2004, some 145,000 foreign tourists visited Suriname).

Suriname's efforts in recent years to liberalize its economic policy created new possibilities for U.S. exports and investments. The U.S. remains one of Suriname's principal trading partners, largely due to ALCOA's longstanding investment in Suriname's bauxite mining and processing industry. Several U.S. corporations represented by Surinamese firms acting as dealers are active in Suriname, largely in the mining, consumer goods, and service sectors. Principal U.S. exports to Suriname include chemicals, vehicles, machine parts, meat, and wheat. U.S. consumer products are increasingly available through Suriname's many trading companies. Opportunities for U.S. exporters, service companies, and engineering firms probably will expand over the next decade.

Suriname is looking to U.S. and other foreign investors to assist in the commercial development of its vast natural resources and to help finance infrastructure improvements. In 2001 Suriname introduced and enacted an investment law. The IMF advised the government in 2003 to revise the law in order to increase its attractiveness to investors. The law was recalled for review, and provisions for new investments are available on a case-by-case basis with the permission of the Minister of Finance.

**Peace and Security:** The United States, through the Department of State, will use education programs to support the military's professionalism and interoperability, enhance respect for human rights, advance

military justice reform, preserve the current climate of respect for civilian rule, and promote effective management of defense resources. In the area of defense, military, and border security restructuring, reform, and operations, U.S. assistance programs will support training to assist the Surinamese military and law enforcement entities to respond to transnational, national, military, criminal, and humanitarian threats, and to enhance Suriname's capacity to monitor and secure remote areas, control its borders, and interdict illicit drugs being trafficked through the country.