



**Central America and Caribbean :: Bahamas, The**

**Introduction :: Bahamas, The**

**Background:**

Lucayan Indians inhabited the islands when Christopher COLUMBUS first set foot in the New World on San Salvador in 1492. British settlement of the islands began in 1647; the islands became a colony in 1783. Since attaining independence from the UK in 1973, The Bahamas has prospered through tourism, international banking, and investment management. Because of its geography, the country is a major transshipment point for illegal drugs, particularly shipments to the US and Europe, and its territory is used for smuggling illegal migrants into the US.

**Geography :: Bahamas, The**

**Location:**

chain of islands in the North Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Florida, northeast of Cuba

**Geographic coordinates:**

24 15 N, 76 00 W

**Map references:**

Central America and the Caribbean

**Area:**

**total:** 13,880 sq km  
**country comparison to the world:** 161  
**land:** 10,010 sq km  
**water:** 3,870 sq km

**Area - comparative:**

slightly smaller than Connecticut

**Land boundaries:**

0 km

**Coastline:**

3,542 km

**Maritime claims:**

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

**Climate:**

tropical marine; moderated by warm waters of Gulf Stream

**Terrain:**

long, flat coral formations with some low rounded hills

**Elevation extremes:**

**lowest point:** Atlantic Ocean 0 m  
**highest point:** Mount Alvernia on Cat Island 63 m

**Natural resources:**

salt, aragonite, timber, arable land

**Land use:**

**arable land:** 0.65%  
**permanent crops:** 0.29%  
**other:** 99.06% (2011)

**Irrigated land:**

10 sq km (2003)

**Total renewable water resources:**

0.02 cu km (2011)

**Natural hazards:**

hurricanes and other tropical storms cause extensive flood and wind damage

**Environment - current issues:**

coral reef decay; solid waste disposal

#### **Environment - international agreements:**

**party to:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands  
**signed, but not ratified:** none of the selected agreements

#### **Geography - note:**

strategic location adjacent to US and Cuba; extensive island chain of which 30 are inhabited

### **People and Society :: Bahamas, The**

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#### **Nationality:**

**noun:** Bahamian(s)  
**adjective:** Bahamian

#### **Ethnic groups:**

black 85%, white 12%, Asian and Hispanic 3%

#### **Languages:**

English (official), Creole (among Haitian immigrants)

#### **Religions:**

Protestant 67.6% (Baptist 35.4%, Anglican 15.1%, Pentecostal 8.1%, Church of God 4.8%, Methodist 4.2%), Roman Catholic 13.5%, other Christian 15.2%, none or unspecified 2.9%, other 0.8% (2000 census)

#### **Population:**

319,031 (July 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 179

**note:** estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher death rates, lower population growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected

#### **Age structure:**

**0-14 years:** 23.6% (male 38,174/female 37,066)  
**15-24 years:** 17.5% (male 28,306/female 27,562)  
**25-54 years:** 44.1% (male 70,093/female 70,608)  
**55-64 years:** 8.1% (male 11,371/female 14,355)  
**65 years and over:** 6.7% (male 8,233/female 13,263) (2013 est.)

#### **Dependency ratios:**

**total dependency ratio:** 40.9 %  
**youth dependency ratio:** 30 %  
**elderly dependency ratio:** 10.8 %  
**potential support ratio:** 9.2 (2013)

#### **Median age:**

**total:** 30.8 years  
**male:** 29.7 years  
**female:** 32 years (2013 est.)

#### **Population growth rate:**

0.89% (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 127

#### **Birth rate:**

15.81 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 126

#### **Death rate:**

6.96 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 135

#### **Net migration rate:**

0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 77

#### **Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 84% of total population (2010)  
**rate of urbanization:** 1.3% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

#### **Major urban areas - population:**

NASSAU (capital) 254,000 (2011)

#### **Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 1.03 male(s)/female  
**0-14 years:** 1.03 male(s)/female  
**15-24 years:** 1.03 male(s)/female  
**25-54 years:** 0.99 male(s)/female  
**55-64 years:** 0.79 male(s)/female  
**65 years and over:** 0.62 male(s)/female  
**total population:** 0.96 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

#### **Maternal mortality rate:**

47 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)  
**country comparison to the world:** 112

#### **Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 12.89 deaths/1,000 live births  
**country comparison to the world:** 126  
**male:** 12.9 deaths/1,000 live births  
**female:** 12.88 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 71.69 years  
**country comparison to the world:** 141  
**male:** 69.25 years  
**female:** 74.19 years (2013 est.)

**Total fertility rate:**

1.97 children born/woman (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 132

**Health expenditures:**

7.7% of GDP (2011)  
**country comparison to the world:** 67

**Physicians density:**

2.82 physicians/1,000 population (2008)

**Hospital bed density:**

3.1 beds/1,000 population (2010)

**Drinking water source:**

**improved:**

urban: 98% of population  
rural: 86% of population  
total: 96% of population

**unimproved:**

urban: 2% of population  
rural: 14% of population  
total: 4% of population (2000 est.)

**Sanitation facility access:**

**improved:**

urban: 100% of population  
rural: 100% of population  
total: 100% of population (2010 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

3.1% (2009 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 24

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**

6,600 (2009 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 114

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

fewer than 500 (2009 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 93

**Obesity - adult prevalence rate:**

34.7% (2008)  
**country comparison to the world:** 13

**Education expenditures:**

NA

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write  
**total population:** 95.6%  
**male:** 94.7%  
**female:** 96.5% (2003 est.)

**School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):**

**total:** 12 years  
**male:** 12 years  
**female:** 12 years (2006)

**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:**

**total:** 18.9%  
**country comparison to the world:** 63  
**male:** 16.7%  
**female:** 21.7% (2007)

**Government:: Bahamas, The**

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**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** Commonwealth of The Bahamas  
**conventional short form:** The Bahamas

**Government type:**

constitutional parliamentary democracy and a Commonwealth realm

**Capital:**

**name:** Nassau

**geographic coordinates:** 25 05 N, 77 21 W

**time difference:** UTC-5 (same time as Washington, DC during Standard Time)

**daylight saving time:** +1hr, begins second Sunday in March; ends first Sunday in November

**Administrative divisions:**

31 districts; Acklins Islands, Berry Islands, Bimini, Black Point, Cat Island, Central Abaco, Central Andros, Central Eleuthera, City of Freeport, Crooked Island and Long Cay, East Grand Bahama, Exuma, Grand Cay, Harbour Island, Hope Town, Inagua, Long Island, Mangrove Cay, Mayaguana, Moore's Island, North Abaco, North Andros, North Eleuthera, Ragged Island, Rum Cay, San Salvador, South Abaco, South Andros, South Eleuthera, Spanish Wells, West Grand Bahama

**Independence:**

10 July 1973 (from the UK)

**National holiday:**

Independence Day, 10 July (1973)

**Constitution:**

previous 1964 (preindependence); latest adopted 20 June 1973, effective 10 July 1973; amended many times, last in 2002; note - in 2012, a constitutional commission was appointed to review and recommend constitutional changes

**Legal system:**

common law system based on the English model

**International law organization participation:**

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt

**Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

**chief of state:** Queen ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952); represented by Governor General Sir Arthur A. FOULKES (since 14 April 2010)

**head of government:** Prime Minister Perry CHRISTIE (since 8 May 2012)

**cabinet:** Cabinet appointed by the governor general on the prime minister's recommendation  
(For more information visit the [World Leaders website](#).)

**elections:** the monarchy is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition is usually appointed prime minister by the governor general; the prime minister recommends the deputy prime minister

**Legislative branch:**

bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (16 seats; members appointed by the governor general upon the advice of the prime minister and the opposition leader to serve five-year terms) and the House of Assembly (38 seats; members elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms); the government may dissolve the parliament and call elections at any time

**elections:** last held on 7 May 2012 (next to be held by May 2017)

**election results:** percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PLP 30, FNM 8

**Judicial branch:**

**highest court(s):** The Bahamas Court of Appeal (consists of the court president and 4 justices, sitting in panels of 3 justices) note - as of 2008, the Bahamas was not a party to the agreement establishing the Caribbean Court of Justice as the highest appellate court for the 15-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM); the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (in London) serves as the final court of appeal for the Bahamas

**judge selection and term of office:** Court of Appeal justices appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister and in consultation with the Judicial and Legal Services Commission; justices appointed for life with mandatory retirement at age 68-70

**subordinate courts:** Supreme Court; Industrial Tribunal; Stipendiary and Magistrates Courts; Family Island Administrators

**Political parties and leaders:**

Free National Movement or FNM [Hubert MINNIS]

Progressive Liberal Party or PLP [Perry CHRISTIE]

**Political pressure groups and leaders:**

Friends of the Environment

**other:** trade unions

**International organization participation:**

ACP, AOSIS, C, Caricom, CDB, CELAC, FAO, G-77, IADB, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ITSO, ITU, LAES, MIGA, NAM, OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, Petrocaribe, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (observer)

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

**chief of mission:** Ambassador Dr. Eugene Glenwood NEWRY (since 3 December 2013)

**chancery:** 2220 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

**telephone:** [1] (202) 319-2660

**FAX:** [1] (202) 319-2668

**consulate(s) general:** Atlanta, Miami, New York

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

**chief of mission:** Ambassador (vacant); Charge d' Affaires John DINKELMAN (since November 2011)

**embassy:** 42 Queen Street, Nassau, New Providence

**mailing address:** local or express mail address: P. O. Box N-8197, Nassau; US Department of State, 3370 Nassau Place, Washington, DC 20521-3370

**telephone:** [1] (242) 322-1181, 328-2206 (after hours)

**FAX:** [1] (242) 328-2206

**Flag description:**

three equal horizontal bands of aquamarine (top), gold, and aquamarine, with a black equilateral triangle based on the hoist side; the band colors represent the golden beaches of the islands surrounded by the aquamarine sea; black represents the vigor and force of a united people, while the pointing triangle indicates the enterprise and determination of the Bahamian people to develop the rich resources of land and sea

**National symbol(s):**

blue marlin; flamingo

**National anthem:**

**name:** "March On, Bahamaland!"

 [PLAY ANTHEM](#)

**lyrics/music:** Timothy GIBSON

**note:** adopted 1973; as a Commonwealth country, in addition to the national anthem, "God Save the Queen" serves as the royal anthem (see United Kingdom)

**Economy:: Bahamas, The****Economy - overview:**

The Bahamas is one of the wealthiest Caribbean countries with an economy heavily dependent on tourism and offshore banking. Tourism together with tourism-driven construction and manufacturing accounts for approximately 60% of GDP and directly or indirectly employs half of the archipelago's labor force. Financial services constitute the second-most important sector of the Bahamian economy and, when combined with business services, account for about 36% of GDP. Manufacturing and agriculture combined contribute less than a 10th of GDP and show little growth, despite government incentives aimed at those sectors. The economy of The Bahamas shrank at an average pace of 0.8% annually between 2007-11, and tourism, financial services, and construction - pillars of the national economy - remained weak. These challenges, coupled with a growing public debt, increases in government expenditures, a narrow revenue base, and heavy dependence on customs and property taxes have led to prospects of limited growth for The Bahamas.

**GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$11.04 billion (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 153

\$10.84 billion (2011 est.)

\$10.66 billion (2010 est.)

**note:** data are in 2012 US dollars

**GDP (official exchange rate):**

\$8.039 billion (2012 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:**

1.8% (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 143

1.7% (2011 est.)

1% (2010 est.)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$31,300 (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 43

\$31,100 (2011 est.)

\$30,900 (2010 est.)

**note:** data are in 2012 US dollars

**GDP - composition, by end use:**

**household consumption:** 70.1%

**government consumption:** 14.9%

**investment in fixed capital:** 31.9%

**investment in inventories:** 1.3%

**exports of goods and services:** 44.8%

**imports of goods and services:** -62.9%  
(2012 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** 2.1%

**industry:** 7.2%

**services:** 90.7% (2012 est.)

**Agriculture - products:**

citrus, vegetables; poultry

**Industries:**

tourism, banking, cement, oil transshipment, salt, rum, aragonite, pharmaceuticals

**Industrial production growth rate:**

NA%

**Labor force:**

192,200 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 173

**Labor force - by occupation:**

**agriculture:** 5%

**industry:** 5%

**tourism:** 50%

**other services:** 40% (2005 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

14% (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 138

14.2% (2009 est.)

**Population below poverty line:**

9.3% (2004)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

**lowest 10%:** 1%

**highest 10%:** 22% (2007 est.)

**Budget:**

**revenues:** \$1.54 billion

**expenditures:** \$2.04 billion (2012 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

19.2% of GDP (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 173

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

-6.2% of GDP (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 178

**Fiscal year:**

1 July - 30 June

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

2% (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 41

3.2% (2011 est.)

**Central bank discount rate:**

4.5% (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 93

4% (31 December 2011 est.)

**Commercial bank prime lending rate:**

4.75% (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 157

5.06% (31 December 2011 est.)

**Stock of narrow money:**

\$1.575 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 132

\$1.435 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

**Stock of broad money:**

\$6.482 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 120

\$6.104 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

**Stock of domestic credit:**

\$8.653 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 103

\$8.511 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

**Market value of publicly traded shares:**

\$2.78 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

**Current account balance:**

-\$1.424 billion (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 126

-\$1.136 billion (2011 est.)

**Exports:**

\$984 million (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 157

\$833.5 million (2011 est.)

**Exports - commodities:**

crawfish, aragonite, crude salt, polystyrene products

**Exports - partners:**

Singapore 25.1%, US 20.6%, Dominican Republic 12.9%, Ecuador 9.4%, Canada 5.8%, Switzerland 4.1%, China 4.1% (2012)

**Imports:**

\$3.386 billion (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 141

\$2.966 billion (2011 est.)

**Imports - commodities:**

machinery and transport equipment, manufactures, chemicals, mineral fuels; food and live animals

**Imports - partners:**

US 30.1%, India 20.3%, Singapore 8.7%, South Korea 6.8%, China 5%, Colombia 4.5%, Canada 4.2% (2012)

**Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:**

\$846.9 million (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 139

\$1.07 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

**Debt - external:**

\$16.35 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 83

\$15.13 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

**Exchange rates:**

Bahamian dollars (BSD) per US dollar -

1 (2012 est.)

1 (2011 est.)

1 (2010 est.)

1 (2008 est.)

1 (2007 est.)

**Energy:: Bahamas, The**

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**Electricity - production:**

1.93 billion kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 137

**Electricity - consumption:**

1.795 billion kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 142

**Electricity - exports:**

0 kWh (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 164

**Electricity - imports:**

0 kWh (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 161

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

493,000 kW (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 139

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

100% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 7

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 46

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

0% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 158

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

0% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 156

**Crude oil - production:**

0 bbl/day (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 153

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 84

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 159

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

0 bbl (1 January 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 107

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 154

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

36,300 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 112

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

41,770 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 63

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

64,600 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 61

**Natural gas - production:**

0 cu m (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 103

**Natural gas - consumption:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 119

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 64

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 159

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

0 cu m (1 January 2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 114

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

4.734 million Mt (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 128

**Communications:: Bahamas, The**

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**Telephones - main lines in use:**

137,000 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 141

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

254,000 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 176

**Telephone system:**

**general assessment:** modern facilities

**domestic:** totally automatic system; highly developed; the Bahamas Domestic Submarine Network links 14 of the islands and is designed to satisfy increasing demand for voice and broadband Internet services

**international:** country code - 1-242; landing point for the Americas Region Caribbean Ring System (ARCOS-1) fiber-optic submarine cable that provides links to South and Central America, parts of the Caribbean, and the US; satellite earth stations - 2 (2007)

**Broadcast media:**

2 TV stations operated by government-owned, commercially run Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas (BCB); multi-channel cable TV subscription service is available; about 15 radio stations operating with BCB operating a multi-channel radio broadcasting network alongside privately owned radio stations (2007)

**Internet country code:**

.bs

**Internet hosts:**

20,661 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 117

**Internet users:**

115,800 (2009)

**country comparison to the world:** 156

**Transportation:: Bahamas, The**

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**Airports:**

61 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** 79

**Airports - with paved runways:**

**total:** 24

**over 3,047 m:** 2

**2,438 to 3,047 m:** 2

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 13

**914 to 1,523 m:** 7 (2013)

**Airports - with unpaved runways:**

**total:** 37

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 4

**914 to 1,523 m:** 16

**under 914 m:**

17 (2013)

**Heliports:**

1 (2013)

**Roadways:**

**total:** 2,700 km

**country comparison to the world:** 170

**paved:** 1,620 km

**unpaved:** 1,080 km (2011)

**Merchant marine:**

**total:** 1,160

**country comparison to the world:** 10

**by type:** barge carrier 1, bulk carrier 238, cargo 170, carrier 2, chemical tanker 87, combination ore/oil 8, container 57, liquefied gas 71, passenger 102, passenger/cargo 26, petroleum tanker 225, refrigerated cargo 97, roll on/roll off 13, specialized tanker 2, vehicle carrier 61

**foreign-owned:** 1,063 (Angola 6, Australia 1, Belgium 6, Bermuda 15, Brazil 1, Canada 96, Croatia 1, Cyprus 23, Denmark 69, Finland 8, France 15, Germany 30, Greece 225, Guernsey 6, Hong Kong 3, Indonesia 2, Ireland 3, Italy 1, Japan 88, Jordan 2, Kuwait 1, Malaysia 13, Monaco 8, Montenegro 2, Netherlands 23, Nigeria 2, Norway 186, Poland 34, Saudi Arabia 16, Singapore 7, South Korea 1, Spain 6, Sweden 11, Switzerland 1, Thailand 4, Turkey 3, UAE 23, UK 18, US 109)

**registered in other countries:** 6 (Panama 6) (2010)

#### Ports and terminals:

**major seaport(s):** Freeport, Nassau, South Riding Point

**container port(s) (TEUs):** Freeport (1,116,272)(2011)

**cruise port(s):** Nassau

#### Military :: Bahamas, The

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##### Military branches:

Royal Bahamas Defense Force: Land Force, Navy, Air Wing (2011)

##### Military service age and obligation:

18 years of age for voluntary male and female service; no conscription (2012)

##### Manpower available for military service:

**males age 16-49:** 85,568 (2010 est.)

##### Manpower fit for military service:

**males age 16-49:** 63,429

**females age 16-49:** 64,645 (2010 est.)

##### Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:

**male:** 2,829

**female:** 2,750 (2010 est.)

##### Military expenditures:

0.6% of GDP (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 157

#### Transnational Issues:: Bahamas, The

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##### Disputes - international:

disagrees with the US on the alignment of the northern axis of a potential maritime boundary

##### Illicit drugs:

transshipment point for cocaine and marijuana bound for US and Europe; offshore financial center