

Background Note: Algeria



PROFILE

OFFICIAL NAME:

[People's Democratic Republic of Algeria](#)

Geography

Location: Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Morocco and Tunisia.

Area: *Total*--2,381,740 sq. km. *Land*--2,381,740 sq. km.; *water*--0 sq. km. More than three times the size of Texas.

Cities: *Capital*--Algiers.

Terrain: Mostly high plateau and desert; some mountains; narrow, discontinuous coastal plain. Mountainous areas subject to severe earthquakes; mud slides.

Climate: Arid to semiarid; mild, wet winters with hot, dry summers along coast; drier with cold winters and hot summers on high plateau; sirocco is a hot, dust/sand-laden wind especially common in summer.

Land use: *Arable land*--3%; *permanent crops*--0%, *permanent pastures*--13%; *forests and woodland*--2%.

People

Nationality: *Noun*--Algerian(s); *adjective*--Algerian.

Population (July 2003 est.): 32,818,500.

Annual growth rate (2003 est.): 1.65%. *Birth rate*--21.94 births/1,000, population; *death rate*--5.09 deaths/1,000 population.

Ethnic groups: Arab-Berber 99%, European less than 1%.

Religions: Sunni Muslim (state religion) 99%, Christian and Jewish 1%.

Languages: Arabic (official), French, Berber dialects.

Education: *Literacy* (definition--age 15 and over can read and write)--total population, 70%; male 78.8%, female 61% (2003 est.)

Health (2003 est.): *Infant mortality rate*--37.74 deaths/1,000 live births. *Life expectancy at birth*--total population, 70.54 years; male 69.14 years, female 72.01 years.

Work force (2003): 9.5 million. *Government*--32%; *agriculture*--14%; *construction and public works*--10%; *industry*--13.4%; *trade*--14.6%, *other*--16%.

Unemployment rate (2004 est.): 30%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 5, 1962 (from France).

Constitution: November 19, 1976; revised November 3, 1988, February 23, 1989, and November 28, 1996.

Branches: Legal system based on French and Islamic law; judicial review of legislative acts in ad hoc Constitutional Council composed of various public officials, including several Supreme Court justices; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction.

Administrative divisions: 48 provinces (wilayates; singular, wilaya).

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal.

National holiday: Revolution Day, November 1, 1954.

Economy

GDP (2004 est.): \$64.3 billion.

GDP growth rate (2004 est.): 4.1%.

Per capita real GDP (2004 est.): \$1,972.

Agriculture: *Products*--wheat, barley, oats, grapes, olives, citrus, fruits; sheep, cattle.

Industry: *Types*--petroleum, natural gas, light industries, mining, electrical, petrochemical, food processing, pharmaceuticals, cement, seawater desalination.

Trade: *Exports*(2004) (est.) \$25 billion: petroleum, natural gas, and petroleum products 97%. *Partners* (2004 est.)--U.S. 18.2%, Italy 16.1%, France 11.4%, Spain 4.7% *Imports*--\$12.3 billion (f.o.b., 2003 est.): capital

goods, food and beverages, consumer goods. *Partners* (2003 est.)--France 22.5%, U.S. 9.6%, Italy 9.5%, Germany 6.5%, Spain 5.2%, Turkey 4.1%, Canada 3.1%.
Budget (2004 est.): *Revenues*--\$23.3 billion; *expenditures*--\$22.2 billion, including capital expenditures of \$7.8 billion.

Debt (external, 2004 est.): \$19 billion.

U.S. economic assistance (2004 est.): \$1.5 million (MEPI and IMET).

Fiscal year: Calendar year.

GEOGRAPHY

Algeria, the second-largest state in Africa, has a Mediterranean coastline of about 998 kilometers (620 mi.). The Tellian and Saharan Atlas mountain ranges cross the country from east to west, dividing it into three zones. Between the northern zone, Tellian Atlas, and the Mediterranean is a narrow, fertile coastal plain--the Tell (Arabic for hill)--with a moderate climate year round and rainfall adequate for agriculture. A high plateau region, averaging 914 meters (3,000 ft.) above sea level, with limited rainfall and great rocky plains and desert, lies between the two mountain ranges. It is generally barren except for scattered clumps of trees and intermittent bush and pastureland. The third and largest zone, south of the Saharan Atlas range of mountains, is mostly desert. About 80% of the country is desert, steppes, wasteland, and mountains.

Algeria's weather is irregular from year to year. In the north, the summers are usually hot with little rainfall. Winter rains begin in the north in October. Frost and snow are rare, except on the highest slopes of the Tellian Atlas Mountains. Dust and sandstorms occur most frequently between February and May.

Soil erosion from overgrazing and other poor farming practices; desertification; dumping of raw sewage, petroleum refining wastes, and other industrial effluents are leading to the pollution of rivers and coastal waters. The Mediterranean Sea, in particular, is becoming polluted from oil wastes, soil erosion, and fertilizer runoff; there are inadequate supplies of potable water.

PEOPLE

Ninety-one percent of the Algerian population lives along the Mediterranean coast on 12% of the country's total land mass. Forty-five percent of the population is urban, and urbanization continues, despite government efforts to discourage migration to the cities. About 1.5 million nomads and semi-settled Bedouin still live in the Saharan area. According to the National Office of Statistics (ONS) the data for the year 2002 indicate that 75% of the Algerian population is below 30.

Nearly all Algerians are Muslim, of Arab, Berber, or mixed Arab-Berber stock. Official data on the number of non-Muslim residents is not available, however practitioners report it to be less than 5,000. Most of the non-Muslim community is comprised of Methodist, Roman Catholic and Evangelical faiths; the Jewish community is virtually non-existent. As of August 2004, there were about 1100 American citizens in the country, the majority of whom live and work in the oil/gas fields of the south.

Algeria's educational system has grown dramatically since 1962; in the last 12 years, attendance has doubled to more than 5 million students. Education is free and compulsory to age 16. Despite government allocation of substantial educational resources, population pressures and a serious shortage of teachers have severely strained the system, as has terrorism attacks against the educational infrastructure during the 1990s. Modest numbers of Algerian students study abroad, primarily in Europe and Canada. In 2000, the government launched a major review of the country's educational system and in 2004 efforts to reform the educational system began.

Housing and medicine continue to be pressing problems in Algeria. Failing infrastructure and the continued influx of people from rural to urban areas has overtaxed both systems. According to the UNDP, Algeria has one of the world's highest per housing unit occupancy rates for housing, and government officials have publicly stated that the country has an immediate shortfall of 1.5 million housing units.

HISTORY

Since the 5th century B.C., the indigenous tribes of northern Africa (identified by the Romans as "Berbers") have been pushed back from the coast by successive waves of Phoenician, Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, Arab, Turkish, and, finally, French invaders. The greatest cultural impact came from the Arab invasions of the 8th and 11th centuries A.D., which brought Islam and the Arabic language. The effects of the most recent (French) occupation--French language and European-inspired socialism--are still pervasive.

North African boundaries have shifted during various stages of the conquests. Algeria's modern borders were created by the French, whose colonization began in 1830. To benefit French colonists, most of whom were farmers and businessmen, northern Algeria was eventually organized into overseas departments of France, with representatives in the French National Assembly. France controlled the entire country, but the traditional Muslim population in the rural areas remained separated from the modern economic infrastructure of the European community.

Indigenous Algerians began their revolt on November 1, 1954, to gain rights denied them under French rule. The revolution, launched by a small group of nationalists who called themselves the National Liberation Front (FLN), was a guerrilla war in which both sides targeted civilians and otherwise used brutal tactics. Eventually, protracted negotiations led to a cease-fire signed by France and the FLN on March 18, 1962, at Evian, France. The Evian accords also provided for continuing economic, financial, technical, and cultural relations, along with interim administrative arrangements until a referendum on self-determination could be held. Over 1 million French citizens living in Algeria at the time, called the "pieds-noirs," left Algeria for France.

The referendum was held in Algeria on July 1, 1962, and France declared Algeria independent on July 3. On September 8, 1963, a Constitution was adopted by referendum, and later that month, Ahmed Ben Bella was formally elected president. On June 19, 1965, President Ben Bella was replaced in a bloodless coup by a Council of the Revolution headed by Minister of Defense Col. Houari Boumediene. Ben Bella was first imprisoned and then exiled. Boumediene, as President of the Council of the Revolution, led the country as Head of State until he was formally elected on December 10, 1976. Boumediene is credited with building "modern Algeria." He died on December 27, 1978.

Following nomination by an FLN Party Congress, Col. Chadli Bendjedid was elected president in 1979 and re-elected in 1984 and 1988. A new constitution was adopted in 1989 that allowed the formation of political associations other than the FLN. It also removed the armed forces, which had run the government since the days of Boumediene, from a designated role in the operation of the government. Among the scores of parties that sprang up under the new constitution, the militant Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was the most successful, winning more than 50% of all votes cast in municipal elections in June 1990 as well as in first stage of national legislative elections held in December 1991.

Faced with the real possibility of a sweeping FIS victory, the National People's Assembly was dissolved by presidential decree on January 4, 1992, and on January 11, under pressure of the military leadership, President Chadli Bendjedid resigned. On January 14, a five-member High Council of State was appointed by the High Council of Security to act as a collegiate presidency and immediately canceled the second round of elections. This action, coupled with political uncertainty and economic turmoil, led to a violent reaction on the part of the Islamists. A campaign of terror in the country, including assassinations, bombings, and massacres, commenced. On January 16, Mohamed Boudiaf, a hero of the Liberation War, returned after 28 years of exile to serve as Algeria's fourth president. Facing sporadic outbreaks of violence and terrorism, the security forces took control of the FIS offices, in early February, and the High Council of State declared a state of emergency. In March, following a court decision, the FIS Party was formally dissolved, and a series of arrests and trials of FIS members occurred resulting in more than 50,000 members being jailed. Algeria became caught in a cycle of violence, which became increasingly random and indiscriminate. On June 29, 1992, President Boudiaf was assassinated in Annaba by Army Lt. Lembarek Boumarafi, who allegedly confessed to carrying out the killing on behalf of the Islamists.

Despite efforts to restore the political process, violence and terrorism characterized the Algeria landscape during the 1990s. In 1994, Liamine Zeroual, former Minister of Defense, was appointed Head of State by the High Council of State for a 3-year term. During this period, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) launched terrorist campaigns against government figures and institutions to protest the banning of the Islamist parties. A breakaway GIA group--the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)--also undertook terrorist activity in the country. Government officials estimate that more than 100,000 Algerians died during this period.

Zeroual called for presidential elections in 1995, though some parties objected to holding elections that excluded the FIS. Zeroual was elected president with 75% of the vote. By 1997, in an attempt to bring political stability to the nation, the Rassemblement National Democratique (RND) party was formed by a progressive group of FLN members. In September 1998, President Liamine Zeroual announced that he

would step down in February 1999, 21 months before the end of his term, and that presidential elections would be held.

Algerians went to the polls in April 1999, following a campaign in which seven candidates qualified for election. On the eve of the election, all candidates except Abdelaziz Bouteflika pulled out amid charges of widespread electoral fraud. Bouteflika, the candidate who appeared to enjoy the backing of the military, as well as FLN and RND party regulars, won with an official vote count of 70% of all votes cast. He was inaugurated on April 27, 1999 for a 5-year term.

President Bouteflika's agenda focused initially on restoring security and stability to the country. Following his inauguration, he proposed an official amnesty for those who fought against the government during the 1990s unless they had engaged in "blood crimes," such as rape or murder. This "Civil Concord" policy was widely approved in a nationwide referendum in September 2000. Government officials estimate that 85% of those fighting the regime during the 1990s have accepted the amnesty offer and have been reintegrated into Algerian society. Bouteflika also has launched national commissions to study education and judicial reform, as well as restructuring of the state bureaucracy.

In 2001, Berber activists in the Kabylie region of the country, reacting to the death of a youth in gendarme custody, unleashed a resistance campaign against what they saw as government repression. Strikes and demonstrations in the Kabylie region were commonplace as a result, and some spread to the capital. Chief among Berber demands is recognition of Tamazight (Berber) as a national language, restitution for death of Kabylies killed or wounded in demonstrations, and greater control over their own regional affairs. In October 2001, the Tamazight language was recognized as a national language but continues to be a matter of contention since it is still not an "official language."

Algeria's most recent presidential election took place on April 8, 2004. For the first time since independence, the presidential race was democratically contested through to the end. Besides incumbent President Bouteflika, five other candidates competed in the election. Opposition candidates complained of some discrepancies in the voting list; irregularities on polling day, particularly in the Kabylie; and of unfair media coverage during the campaign as Bouteflika, by virtue of his office, appeared on state-owned television daily. Bouteflika was re-elected in the first round of the election with 84.99% of the vote. Just over 58% of those Algerians eligible to vote participated in the election.

In the five years since Bouteflika was first elected, the security situation in Algeria has improved markedly. However, terrorism has not been totally eliminated, and terrorist incidents still occur, particularly in the provinces of Boumerdes, Tizi-Ouzou, and in the remote southern areas of the country. An estimated 50-60 Algerians are killed monthly, down from a high of 1,200 or more in the mid-1990s.

GOVERNMENT

Under the 1976 Constitution (as modified 1979, and amended in 1988, 1989, and 1996) Algeria is a multi-party state. The Ministry of the Interior must approve all political parties. According to the Constitution, no political association may be formed if it is "based on differences in religion, language, race gender or region." The head of state is the president of the republic, who is elected to a 5-year term, renewable once. Algeria has universal suffrage at the age of 18. The president is the head of the Council of Ministers and of the High Security Council. He appoints the prime minister who also is the head of government. The prime minister appoints the Council of Ministers.

The Algerian Parliament is bicameral, consisting of a lower chamber, the National People's Assembly (APN), with 389 members and an upper chamber, the Council of the Nation, with 144 members. The APN is elected every 5 years. The next round of legislative elections is scheduled to take place in 2007. Two-thirds of the Council of the Nation is elected by regional and municipal authorities; the rest are appointed by the president. The Council of the Nation serves a 6-year term with one-half of the seats up for election or reappointment every 3 years. The last round of elections and appointments to the Council of Nations occurred in 2003. Either the president or one of the parliamentary chambers may initiate legislation. Legislation must be brought before both chambers before it becomes law. Sessions of the APN are televised.

Algeria is divided into 48 wilayates (states or provinces) headed by walīs (governors) who report to the Minister of Interior. Each wilaya is further divided into communes. The wilayates and communes are each governed by an elected assembly.

Principal Government Officials

President and Minister of National Defense--Abdelaziz Bouteflika
Prime Minister--Ahmed Ouyahia

Other Ministers

Agriculture and Rural Development--Barkat, Said
Commerce--Boukrouh, Noureddine
Communication--Haichour, Boudjemaa
Culture--Toumi, Khalida
Energy and Mines--Khelil, Chakib
Environment--Rahmani, Cherif
Finance--Benachenhou, Abdelatif
Fisheries and Sea Resources--Mimoune, Smail
Foreign Affairs--Belkhadem, Abdelaziz
Health, Population and Hospital Reform--Redjimi, Mourad
Higher Education and Scientific Research--Harraoubia, Rachid
Housing & Town Planning--Hamimid, Mohamed Nadir
Industry--Djaaboub, El-Hachemi
Posts, Information and Communications Technologies--Tou, Amar
Interior--Zerhouni, Nourredine Yazid
Justice--Belaiz, Tayeb
Labor and Social Security--Louh, Tayeb
Moudjhidine (Veterans)--Abbas, Mohamed Cherif
National Education--Benbouzid, Boubekeur
Vocational Training--Khaldi, El Hadi
Public Works--Ghoul, Amar
Minister in Charge of Relations With the Parliament--Khoudri, Mahmoud
Religious Affairs--Goulamallah, Bouabdellah
Small and Medium-Sized Industries--Benabada, Mustapha
Tourism--Kara, Mohamed Seghir
Transport--Maghlaoui, Mohamed
Water Resource--Sellal, Abdelmalek
Youth and Sports--Ziari, Abdelaziz

Ministers Delegate

Minister Delegate in Charge of Maghreb and African Affairs--Messahel, Abdelkader
Minister Delegate in Charge of the Family and Women's Affairs--Djaafar, Nouara Saadia
Minister Delegate in Charge of Financial Reform--Djoudi, Karim
Minister Delegate in Charge of Local Collectives--Kablia, Daho Ould
Minister Delegate in Charge of National Community Abroad--Messadi, Sakina
Minister Delegate in Charge of Rural Development--Benaissa, Rachid
Minister Delegate in Charge of Scientific Research--Bendjaballah, Souad
Minister Delegate in Charge of Town Planning & Environment--Boukerzaza, Abderrachid
Minister Delegate in Charge of Participation & Investment Promotion--Hamlaoui, Yahia
Secretary General of the Government--Noui, Ahmed
Speaker of the National People's Assembly (Lower House)--Saidani, Amar
Speaker of the Council of Nations (Upper House)--Bensalah, Abdelkader
Governor, Central Bank--Laksaci, Mohamed

Ambassador to the United States--vacant
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York--Baali, Abdallah

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

A decade of terrorist violence in Algeria has resulted in more than 100,000 deaths since 1991. Although the security situation in the country has improved, addressing the underlying issues, which brought about the political turmoil of the 1990s, remains the government's major task. In keeping with its amended

Constitution, the Algerian Government espouses participatory democracy and free-market competition. The government has stated that it will continue to open the political process and encourage the creation of political institutions. Presidential elections took place in April 2004 and returned President Bouteflika to office with 84.99% of the vote.

Algeria has more than 30 daily newspapers published in French and Arabic, with a total publication run of more than 1.5 million copies. In 2001, the government amended the penal code provisions relating to defamation and slander, a step widely viewed as an effort to rein in the press. While the Algerian press is relatively free to write as they choose, use of the defamation laws significantly increased the level of press harassment following President Bouteflika's April 2004 re-election victory. As a result, the press has begun to self-censor. Government monopoly of newsprint and advertising is seen as another means to influence the press, although it has permitted newspapers to create their own printing distribution networks.

Population growth and associated problems--unemployment and underemployment, inability of social services to keep pace with rapid urban migration, inadequate industrial management and productivity, a decaying infrastructure--continue to plague Algerian society. Increases in the production and prices of oil and gas over the past decade have led to exchange reserves of \$34 billion, forecast to be \$46 billion by the end of 2004. The government began an economic reform program in 1994, which focuses on macroeconomic stability and structural reform. These reforms are aimed at liberalizing the economy, making Algeria competitive in the global market, and meeting the needs of the Algerian people.

ECONOMY

The hydrocarbons sector is the backbone of the Algerian economy, accounting for roughly 60% of budget revenues, nearly 30% of GDP, and over 95% of export earnings. Algeria has the seventh-largest reserves of natural gas in the world (2.7% of proven world total) and is the second-largest gas exporter; it ranks 14th for oil reserves. Its key oil and gas customers are Italy, Germany, France, Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. U.S. companies have played a major role in developing Algeria's oil and gas sector; of the \$4.1 billion (on a historical-cost basis, according to statistics gathered by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis) in U.S. investment in Algeria, the vast bulk is in the petroleum sector.

Faced with declining oil revenues and high-debt interest payments at the beginning of the 1990s, Algeria implemented a stringent macroeconomic stabilization program and rescheduled its Paris Club debt in the mid-1990s. The macroeconomic program has been particularly successful in reducing inflation from averages of near 30% in the mid 1990s to 2% in 2003, and in narrowing the budget deficit. Algeria's economy has grown at about 2-4% annually since 1999 and reached growth of over 6% in 2003. The country's foreign debt has fallen from a high of \$28 billion in 1999 to an estimated \$19 billion in 2004. The spike in oil prices in 1999-2000 and 2004, the government's tight fiscal policy and conservative budgeting of oil prices from 2000 to present, as well as a large increase in the trade surplus and the near tripling of foreign exchange reserves has helped the country's finances. The government pledges to continue its efforts to diversify the economy by attracting foreign and domestic investment outside the energy sector. However, it has thus far had little success in reducing high unemployment, officially estimated at 30%, and improving living standards.

Priority areas are banking and judicial reform, improving the investment environment, partial or complete privatization of state enterprises, and reducing government bureaucracy. The government has sold off numerous state enterprises and more are expected to be up for offer. The government also has begun to privatize certain sectors of the economy and embrace joint venture investment opportunities with traditionally state owned and operated entities. In 2001, Algeria signed an Association Agreement with the European Union. The government is in an advanced stage of accession negotiations with the World Trade Organization.

DEFENSE

Algeria's armed forces, known collectively as the Popular National Army (ANP), total 119,000 active members, with some 100,000 reservists. The president serves as Minister of National Defense. Military forces are supplemented by a 45,000-member gendarmerie, a rural police force, under the control of the president and a 30,000-member Suret  National or Metropolitan police force under the Ministry of the Interior. Two years of national military service is compulsory for males.

Algeria is a leading military power in the region and has demonstrated remarkable success in its struggle against terrorism. The Algerian military, having fought a decade-long insurgency, intends to increase expenditures in an effort to modernize and return to a more traditional defense role. Projected defense expenditures accounted for some \$2.5 billion or 3.9% of GDP (FY 2004).

Due to difficulties in acquiring U.S. military equipment, Algeria's primary military supplier has been Russia, and to a lesser extent China. Algeria has, however, in recent years, begun to diversify its supplies of military equipment to include U.S.-made airborne surveillance aircraft and ground radars. In June 2004, the U.S. and Algeria agreed to establish a formal military dialogue.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Algeria has traditionally practiced an activist foreign policy and in the 1960s and 1970s was noted for its support of Third World policies and independence movements. Algerian diplomacy was instrumental in obtaining the release of U.S. hostages from Iran in 1980. Since his first election in 1999, President Bouteflika worked to restore Algeria's international reputation, traveling extensively throughout the world. In July 2001, he became the first Algerian President to visit the White House in 16 years. He has made official visits to France, South Africa, Italy, Spain, Germany, China, Japan, and Russia, among others, since his inauguration.

Algeria has taken the lead in working on issues related to the African Continent. Host of the OAU Conference in 2000, Algeria also was key in bringing Ethiopia and Eritrea to the peace table in 2000. It has worked closely with its African neighbors to establish the New African Partnership. Algeria has taken a lead in reviving the Union of the Arab Maghreb with its neighbors.

Since 1976, Algeria has supported the Polisario, a group claiming to represent the population of Western Sahara. Contending that Sahrawi have a right to self-determination under the UN Charter, Algeria has provided the Polisario with material, financial, and political support and sanctuary in southwestern Algeria around Tindouf. UN involvement in the Western Sahara includes MINURSO, a peacekeeping force, and UNHCR, for refugee assistance and resettlement. Active diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute under the auspices of the Special Representative of the Secretary General are ongoing. Although the land border between Morocco and Algeria was closed in the wake of a terrorist attack, the two have worked at improving relations, and in July 2004, Morocco lifted visa requirements for Algerians. Algeria has friendly relations with its other neighbors in the Maghreb, Tunisia and Libya, and with its sub-Saharan neighbors, Mali and Niger. It closely monitors developments in the Middle East and has been a strong proponent of the rights of the Palestinian people, calling publicly for an end to violence in the Occupied Territories.

Algeria has diplomatic relations with more than 100 foreign countries, and over 90 countries maintain diplomatic representation in Algiers. Algeria holds a nonpermanent, rotating seat on the UN Security Council. Its tenure began January 2004 and ends December 2005.

U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS

In July 2001, President Bouteflika became the first Algerian President to visit the White House since 1985. This visit, followed by a second meeting in November 2001, a meeting in New York in September 2003, and President Bouteflika's participation at the June 2004 G8 Sea-Island Summit, is indicative of the growing relationship between the United States and Algeria. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, contacts in key areas of mutual concern, including law enforcement and counter-terrorism cooperation, have intensified. Algeria publicly condemned the terrorist attacks on the United States and has been strongly supportive of the international war against terrorism. The United States and Algeria consult closely on key international and regional issues. The pace and scope of senior-level visits has accelerated. In June 2003, Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman traveled to Algeria, followed by the October 2003 and May 2004 visits of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, William Burns. Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Algiers in December 2003.

In 2004, U.S. direct investment in Algeria totaled \$4.1 billion, mostly in the petroleum sector, which U.S. companies dominate. American companies also are active in banking and finance, services, pharmaceuticals, medical facilities, telecommunications, aviation, and information technology sectors. Algeria is the United States' 10th-largest market in the Middle East/North African region. U.S. exports to Algeria totaled \$487 million in 2003, a decrease of almost 50% over 2002. Imports nearly doubled over the same period, from \$2.4 billion in 2002 to \$4.7 billion in 2003. Algeria exports over \$2.6 billion (2003) of petroleum products and LNG to the United States, primarily to New England. In March 2004, President Bush

designated Algeria a beneficiary country for duty-free treatment under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

In July 2001, the United States and Algeria signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, which establishes common principles on which the economic relationship is founded. On an ongoing basis the two governments meet to discuss trade and investment policies and opportunities to enhance the economic relationship. The Export-Import Bank has an active guarantee program in Algeria; current exposure is about \$1.8 billion, primarily for petroleum projects and aircraft acquisition. Within the framework of the U.S.-North African Economic Partnership (USNAEP), the United States provided about \$1.0 million in technical assistance to Algeria in 2003. This program supports and encourages Algeria's economic reform program and includes support for World Trade Organization accession negotiations, debt management, and improving the investment climate. In 2003, USNAEP programs were rolled over into Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) activities. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has provided Algeria with a GSM 102 program valued at \$50 million for the purchase of U.S. agricultural products.

The United States has a small, but growing (\$550,000 per year) International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program for training Algerian military personnel in the United States. Algeria received \$200,000 in 2004 to participate in the Department of Defense's Regional Country Terror Fellowship Program. Contacts between the Algerian and U.S. militaries have accelerated in the past several years: Algeria has hosted U.S. naval ship visits and has begun a series of joint naval exercises. Staff exchanges between the two sides are frequent and Algeria has hosted senior U.S. military officials.

The United States has implemented modest university linkages programs and has placed two English Language Fellows, the first since 1993, with the Ministry of Education to assist in the development of ESL courses at the Ben Aknoun Training Center. In 2004, Algeria was again the recipient of a grant under the Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation. That fund provided a grant of \$39,000 to restore the Basilica of St. Augustine in Annaba. Algeria also received an \$80,000 grant to fund microscholarships to design and implement an American English-language program for Algerian high school students in four major cities.

Initial funding through the Middle East Partnership Initiative ([MEPI](#)) has been allocated to support the work of Algeria's developing civil society through programming that provides training to journalists, businesspersons, and the heads of leading nongovernmental organizations. Additional funding through the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund will assist civil society groups focusing on the issues of the disappeared, and Islam and democracy.

The official U.S. presence in Algeria remains limited, due in large part to reductions in staff during the mid-1990s in response to a deteriorating security environment. During the past 2 years, the embassy has moved toward more normal operations and now provides most embassy services to the American and Algerian communities.

Principal U.S. Officials

Ambassador--[Richard W. Erdman](#)

Deputy Chief of Mission--Marc J. Sievers

Political/Economic Chief--John M. Underriner

Economic/Commercial Officer--Michael E. Pignatello

Foreign Commercial Officer (resident in Casablanca)--Gail Del Rosal

Foreign Agriculture Service Officer (resident in Rabat)--Mike Fay

Consular Officer--Kristin Bongiovanni

Management Officer--Hugues Ogier

Public Affairs Officer--Linda Cowher

Defense Attaché--Lt. Col. John Hannen, USAF

Regional Security Officer--John C. Picardy

The U.S. Embassy is located at 4 Chemin Cheikh Bachir El-Ibrahimi, Algiers; tel. 213 (21) 691255; fax: 213 (21) 693979.

TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION

The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Program provides Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, and Public Announcements. **Consular Information Sheets** exist for all

countries and include information on entry requirements, currency regulations, health conditions, areas of instability, crime and security, political disturbances, and the addresses of the U.S. posts in the country. **Travel Warnings** are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. **Public Announcements** are issued as a means to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term conditions overseas which pose significant risks to the security of American travelers. Free copies of this information are available by calling the Bureau of Consular Affairs at 202-647-5225 or via the fax-on-demand system: 202-647-3000. Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings also are available on the Consular Affairs Internet home page: <http://travel.state.gov>. Consular Affairs Tips for Travelers publication series, which contain information on obtaining passports and planning a safe trip abroad are on the internet and hard copies can be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, telephone: 202-512-1800; fax 202-512-2250.

Emergency information concerning Americans traveling abroad may be obtained from the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at (202) 647-5225. For after-hours emergencies, Sundays and holidays, call 202-647-4000.

The National Passport Information Center (NPIC) is the U.S. Department of State's single, centralized public contact center for U.S. passport information. Telephone: 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778). Customer service representatives and operators for TDD/TTY 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 in Atlanta, Georgia. A hotline at 877-FYI-TRIP (877-394-8747) and a web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm> give the most recent health advisories, immunization recommendations or requirements, and advice on food and drinking water safety for regions and countries. A booklet entitled Health Information for International Travel (HHS publication number CDC-95-8280) is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, tel. (202) 512-1800.

Information on travel conditions, visa requirements, currency and customs regulations, legal holidays, and other items of interest to travelers also may be obtained before your departure from a country's embassy and/or consulates in the U.S. (for this country, see "Principal Government Officials" listing in this publication).

U.S. citizens who are long-term visitors or traveling in dangerous areas are encouraged to register at the Consular section of the U.S. embassy upon arrival in a country by filling out a short form and sending in a copy of their passports. This may help family members contact you in case of an emergency.

Further Electronic Information

Department of State Web Site. Available on the Internet at <http://www.state.gov>, the Department of State web site provides timely, global access to official U.S. foreign policy information, including [Background Notes](#) and [daily press briefings](#) along with the directory of [key officers](#) of Foreign Service posts and more.

[Export.gov](#) provides a portal to all export-related assistance and market information offered by the federal government and provides trade 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, business, and international trade information from the Federal government. The site includes current and historical trade-related releases, international market research, trade opportunities, and country analysis and provides access to the [National Trade Data Bank](#).

