

- appendices which provide additional detailed information in support of the conclusions and recommendations.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

General

The Turks and Caicos Islands is located south-west of the Bahamas and north of Haiti. (See Appendix 3.) It consists of four larger islands (North, Middle and East Caicos and Providenciales), three smaller islands (South and West Caicos and Grand Turk) and some 23 small islands and cays. The low-lying rocky islands are shrub covered and are surrounded by continuous coral reef. The climate is warm (average temperature 28C) and the average rainfall varies from 530 mm (21 inches) in the eastern islands to 1,000 mm (40 inches) in the western islands. The total area is about 430 sq. km. and the population in 1988 was estimated at 14,000 (33 persons per sq. km. - one of the lower densities in the Caribbean). The capital, Cockburn Town is on Grand Turk. Most persons speak English but a form of creole is also spoken.

Background

The Islands, which had been a Jamaican dependency from 1874 until 1959, became a separate British colony in 1962. They were accorded their own Governor for the first time in 1972. The pro-independence People's Democratic Movement (PDM) won a majority of seats in 1976 in the first election held under the new constitution. The PDM made an agreement with Britain in 1980 whereby if they won the 1980 elections, the Islands would receive their independence and a payment of UK pounds 12 million from the UK. However, the PDM lost the election to the Progressive National Party (PNP) which is committed to continued dependence status. In the 1984 general election the PNP led by Chief Minister Norman Saunders won 8 of the 11 elective seats. The question of independence was not raised by either party during the 1984 elections.

In September 1986 a constitutional commission was appointed in September 1986 to review the Islands' future government. An agreement with the USA was signed in September 1986 giving U.S. investigators into drug trafficking access to banking information on the islands. Three of the four members of the Advisory Council resigned from the PNP in February 1987 and subsequently formed a new party, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The constitutional commission's recommendations were accepted by the British Government in March 1987 and a general election was held in March 1988 following the reintroduction of the Constitution in an amended form.