

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is situated in the Caribbean Sea off the north east coast of South America. Neighbouring States are Venezuela, Grenada, St. Vincent, Guyana and Barbados. The Republic comprises the two main islands for which it is named and several other smaller islands, some of which are uninhabited. The total land area is approximately 5,000 km².

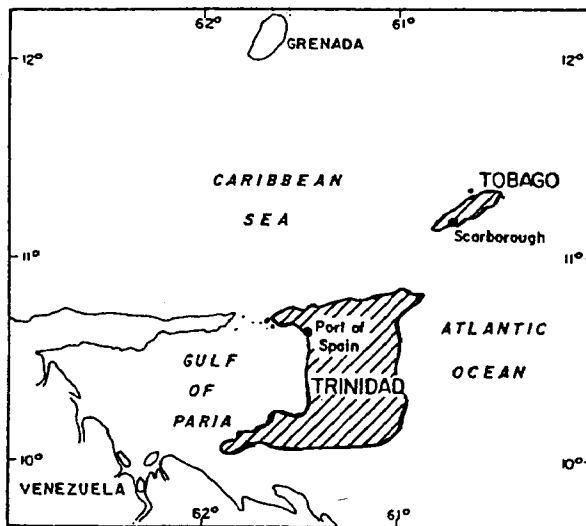


FIG. 1.- Trinidad and Tobago.

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, in 1986, declared itself an Archipelagic State under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and has declared a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Archipelagic baselines points have been surveyed and baselines established. The total area of Archipelagic waters, Territorial Seas and EEZ is approximately 75,000 km². The maritime boundaries defining the EEZ have not yet been agreed with all neighbouring States.

The population is about 1.3 million made up of a majority whose ancestors originated in Africa and India, and a minority of Chinese, Syrian, Spanish, Portuguese, French and other European descendants. The capital city is Port of Spain located in Trinidad. The main town in Tobago is Scarborough.

Trinidad was visited and named by Christopher COLOMBUS on his third voyage in 1498, when the island was inhabited by Arawaks and Caribs. Trinidad remained an underdeveloped Spanish possession for the following 300 years until captured by the British in 1797. In 1802, Trinidad became the first British Crown Colony. Tobago became a British Colony in 1814 and, in 1889, both islands were joined administratively. In 1899, Trinidad and Tobago became a joint British Crown Colony.

Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence in 1962 and became a Republic within the British Commonwealth in 1976.

The system of government is based on the British "Westminster" model with a parliament consisting of an upper house of appointed senators and a lower house of elected members. There is a written constitution and a President is Head of State.

The economy is based mainly on the oil and natural gas industries. The first land-based oil well in Trinidad was drilled over 100 years ago. The present oil and gas extraction is from land based sited and marine areas off the east, south and west coasts of Trinidad. Tobago is an important tourist destination and has some spectacular coral reefs which have been designated as marine conservation areas.

The Hydrographic Unit

Establishment of the Hydrographic Unit was implemented by the Government in 1982 under a technical cooperation project of the United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation for Development. Prior to independence in 1962, hydrographic surveys were conducted by the British Admiralty. In spite of considerable land surveying expertise in the country, hydrography had been neglected in the period 1962-1982.

The initial United Nations project was completed in 1987, by which time the Hydrographic Unit was well established with trained staff, equipment, two survey vessels and had printed the first coloured navigational chart to IHO standards. A network of automatic tide gauges had been established, tidal data had been updated and annual tide tables published.

A second United Nations project of 15 months duration will be completed by the end of 1992. The second project has provided additional staff training to FIG/IHO category "B" level, GPS receivers, computer and printing equipment. The main core of the project, however, was a pilot bathymetric survey of the outer part of the EEZ which was carried out under a sub-contract. The survey was carried out using multibeam, wide swathe sonar equipment and differential GPS navigation with Trinidad and Tobago staff assisting.

The Hydrographic Unit is a civilian organisation within the Lands and Survey Division of the Ministry of Planning and Development. The Unit has a total complement of 22 professional/technical staff and 26 semi-skilled or unskilled staff. The Unit is working through a long-term work programme which aims to resurvey and chart all areas important to shipping where depths are 30 metres or less, during this, it is intended to provide full bathymetric charting of the EEZ by the turn of century. The Unit carries out various, survey-related activities for several Government agencies. These activities include position fixing services such as in the establishment of navigational aids; geodetic and cartographic assistance in the continuing maritime boundary negotiations; mapping of offshore lease areas for mineral exploration/extraction and establishment of a database for all offshore structures.

The Acting Director of Surveys is Mr. Francis L. CHARLES. The Officer in charge of the Hydrographic Unit is Mr. Peter R. BEARD.