



## JAMAICA



**Background:** the Spanish settled the island - discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1494 - early in the 16th century. The native Taino Indians, who had inhabited Jamaica for centuries, were gradually exterminated, replaced by African slaves. England seized the island in 1655 and a plantation economy - based on sugar, cocoa, and coffee - was established. The abolition of slavery in 1834 freed a quarter million slaves, many of which became small farmers. Jamaica gradually obtained increasing independence from Britain, and in 1958 it joined

other British Caribbean colonies in forming the Federation of the West Indies. Jamaica gained full independence when it withdrew from the federation in 1962. Deteriorating economic conditions during the 1970s led to recurrent violence as rival gangs created by the major political parties evolved into powerful organized crime networks involved in international drug smuggling and money laundering. The cycle of violence, drugs, and poverty has served to impoverish large sectors of the populace. Nonetheless, many rural and resort areas remain relatively safe and contribute substantially to the economy.

**Geography Jamaica.** Location: Caribbean, island in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba. Area: total: 10,991 sq. km. Area - comparative: slightly smaller than Connecticut. Coastline: 1,022 km. Climate: tropical; hot, humid; temperate interior. Terrain: mostly mountains, with narrow, discontinuous coastal plain. Natural resources: bauxite, gypsum, and limestone. Natural hazards: hurricanes (especially July to November) Environment - current issues: heavy rates of deforestation; coastal waters polluted by industrial waste, sewage, and oil spills; damage to coral reefs. Geography - note: strategic location between Cayman Trench and Jamaica Channel, the main sea-lanes for the Panama Canal. (CIA Fact Book 2006)

**Military notes.** The Jamaica Defence Force. In late 1987, Jamaica's combined armed forces, the Jamaican Defence Force (JDF), consisted of a ground force supported by small air and coastal patrol contingents. Its mission was to defend the country against aggression and to support the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), as required. The predominant element in the JDF is the Jamaica Regiment; whose origins go back to the West India Regiment. The West India Regiment formed the core of the defense force of the short-lived West Indies Federation in 1959-61. In the mid-1980s, the JDF's predominant ground force element consisted of the First Battalion and a support and service battalion. Once the sole operational element of the former Ministry of Defence, the JDF, together with the police, was placed under the Ministry of National Security and Justice in 1974. By 1986 JDF ground force equipment was almost exclusively of British origin and included the SLR rifle, Sterling sub-machine gun, general-purpose machine gun, and twelve 81mm mortars. The army also had a small number of Ferret scout cars, supplemented by five Commando V100s in 1970 and a further fifteen Cadillac-Gage V-150 Commandos from the United States circa 1985.

### 1970 Car, Armd, 4x4. Commando V100.

Jamaica received five Commando V100s from the US as part of Military Aid program, all of these vehicles are probably out of service or held in reserve (see US for vehicle details).

### 1986 Car, Armd, 4x4. Commando V150.



Above: One of the 15 Cammando V-150 armored cars in the Jamaican inventory, as of 2000 at least ten vehicles were still in service. (Photo: JDF)