

Marshall islands energy independence

The Marshall Islands (Marshallese: *ṂajeṂ*), officially the Republic of the Marshall Islands (Marshallese: *AolepṂ AorṂkin ṂajeṂ*), is an island country west of the International Date Line and north of the equator in the Micronesia region of the Northwestern Pacific Ocean.

The Empire of Japan occupied the islands in the autumn of 1914 at the beginning of World War I. After the war, the Marshalls and other former German Pacific colonies north of the equator became the Japanese South Seas Mandate. The United States occupied the islands during World War II and administered them as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands after the war. Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll and Enewetak Atoll.

The U.S. government formed the Congress of Micronesia in 1965, a plan for increased self-governance of Pacific islands. In May 1979, the United States gave the Marshall Islands independence by recognizing its constitution and president, Amata Kabua. Full sovereignty or self-government was achieved in a Compact of Free Association with the United States. Marshall Islands has been a member of the Pacific Community (PC) since 1983 and a United Nations member state since 1991.

The majority of the citizens of the Republic of Marshall Islands are of Marshallese descent, though there are small numbers of immigrants from the United States, China, Philippines, and other Pacific islands. The two official languages are Marshallese, which is one of the Oceanic languages, and English. Almost the entire population of the islands practices some religion: three-quarters of the country follows either the United Church of Christ - Congregational in the Marshall Islands (UCCMI) or the Assemblies of God.

On August 21, 1526, Spanish explorer Alonso de Salazar was the first European to sight the Marshall Islands. While commanding the *Santa Maria de la Victoria*, he sighted an atoll with a green lagoon, which may have been Taongi. The crew could not land, because of strong currents and water too deep for the ship's anchor, so the ship sailed for Guam two days later.

In 1857, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent two families to establish a mission church and school at Ebon. By 1875, the missionaries had established churches on five atolls and had baptized more than 200 islanders; and one traveler noted that most women on Ebon wore western clothes and many men wore trousers by the mid-1870s.

Contact between the Marshallese and westerners led to sometimes lethal outbreaks of western diseases, including influenza, measles, syphilis, and typhoid fever; Increased access to alcohol led to social problems in some Marshallese communities; and on several atolls conflicts erupted between rival iroij with access to firearms.



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In 1947, the United States entered into an agreement with the UN Security Council to administer much of Micronesia, including the Marshall Islands, as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

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Web: <https://sumthingtasty.co.za/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

