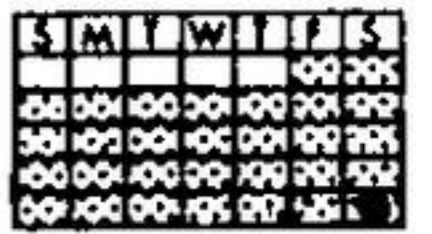


# Is U.S. still an imperialist nation?

## THE WORLD ALMANAC DATE BOOK

Sept. 30, 1989

Today is the 273rd day of 1989 and the 9th day of autumn.



**TODAY'S HISTORY:** On this day in 1954, the first atomic-powered submarine, U.S.S. Nautilus, was commissioned at Groton, Conn.

**TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS:** Deborah Kerr (1921-), actress; Truman Capote (1924-1984), novelist; Angie Dickinson (1931-), actress; Johnny Mathis (1935-), singer; Marilyn McCoo (1943-), singer; Deborah Allen (1953-), singer.

**TODAY'S QUOTE:** "Venice is like eating an entire box of chocolate liqueurs in one go." — Truman Capote

**TODAY'S MOON:** Day after new moon (Sept. 29).



**TODAY'S BARBS**  
BY PHIL PASTORET

A pessimist is a person who looks on the bright side of things in hopes it will tarnish while being watched.

There's nothing like a weekend spent away from civilization — fortunately.  
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By JOHN D. HARBRON  
Foreign Affairs Analyst  
Thomson News Service

The dispatch of American military forces to the island of St. Croix, one of the United States Virgin Islands, to stop the looting and lawlessness that followed the destruction reaped by Hurricane Hugo, is a reminder of how many small but often strategic island territories are still held around the world by the United States.

All of them together - from the Caribbean to the South Pacific - may not make up enough territory to say the U.S. really is the last of the old colonial powers.

But the fact that the U.S. still holds on to so many of them as we near the end of the 20th century brings accusations from some local leaders that a benign American imperialism still exists - or else why are they not independent?

Those who did not know the U.S. Virgin Islands have been American territory for more than 70 years (they were bought from Denmark in 1917 for a mere \$25 million) probably believed - and quite inaccurately - that the quick arrival of 1,000 U.S. troops and armed U.S. Coast Guard vessels to restore order was just another of the many American military invasions of an independent Caribbean nation.

The urge to be independent, like most of their neighboring islands, is much more pronounced in such

U.S. South Pacific territories as American Samoa, Guam and the so-called Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands than it is in the tiny U.S. Virgin Islands.

Most residents of the much larger Puerto Rico, a self-governing "commonwealth" within the United States, are satisfied with their status. All of the commonwealth's inhabitants are U.S. citizens.

Despite that apparent benefit, though, a small but strong independence movement has existed in Puerto Rico since it was annexed from Spain in 1898. Puerto Rico's independentistas would like to see the island take its chances as a new Caribbean nation.

However, the U.S. Virgin Islands, with a small population of 108,000, rely almost totally on the U.S. and Puerto Rico for 90 per cent of the islands' trade and tourism. Last year, no fewer than 800,000 tourists visited the U.S. Virgin Islands, leaving an estimated \$1.1 billion (U.S.) in the local economy.

But in the South Pacific - especially in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (composed of the island archipelagoes of the Carolinas, Marshall and Marianas), quite different issues have aroused local demands for separation.

### DETERIORATION

The chief of these has been local claims of continuing environmen-

tal and human deterioration as a legacy of the now long-abandoned U.S. atmospheric atomic bomb tests, which were carried out openly in these islands during the 1950s.

Then there is the local fear, less pronounced in the 1980s than in the '60s and '70s, that the U.S. some day would want to use the islands as military bases, as had each of the three previous colonial masters back to the 18th century - Spain, Germany and Japan, in that order.

American Samoa, which, like the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, is a self-governing "unincorporated territory of the U.S.," coming under the Department of the Interior in Washington, feels the effects of being close to such established independent South Pacific island-nations as Fiji, Tonga and former British Samoa, which gained its independence in 1962.

Historically speaking, American Samoa can be called "more colonial" than any of the other U.S. territories since it became a U.S. possession back in 1899 as part of a classic division of territory by imperial powers. That year, Britain and Imperial Germany renounced all their claims to what became American Samoa.

Finally, there is the tiny and truly strategic U.S. island of Guam.

Though it is geographically one of the Marianas group, Guam also has become another "unincorporated territory of the U.S." under the U.S. Interior Department.

During the Vietnam War, Guam was the air base for the hundreds of B-52 bombers that bombed North Vietnam. Before the Second World War, Guam was the major U.S. listening post against the Japanese who ruled the Carolinas, Marshalls and Marianas. Japan had turned them into major military and naval establishments - bases that U.S. forces ultimately captured at tremendous cost.

Even today, with no conceivable enemy around in the South Pacific, the U.S. navy and air force still occupy about a third of the land space in that tiny 450-square-kilometre island.

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