
COSTA RICA

República de Costa Rica

Area: 51,100 sq. km
Population: 2,400,000
Capital: San José

Head of State: Luis Alberto Monge Alvarez (President)
Minister of Public Security: Benjamín Piza Carranza

Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces (provincias), listed below with main towns in brackets:

Alajuela (Alajuela)	Limón (Puerto Limón)
Cartago (Cartago)	Puntarenas (Puntarenas)
Guanacaste (Liberia)	San José (San José)
Heredia (Heredia)	

INTRODUCTION

The constitution of Costa Rica has forbidden the establishment or maintenance of an army since 1949, ostensibly to curb military interference in politics. Since then it has relied on the Civil Guard (Guardia Civil), a purely defensive

paramilitary force which is similar to an army in all but name, but also fulfills the role of a police force.

ORGANIZATION

The Civil Guard is controlled by the Ministry of Public Security and has a personnel strength of some 5000. It has its headquarters at San José, and regional commands in each of the provincial capitals. There is a Traffic Section (Sección de Tránsito) and an Air Section (Sección Aérea) in San José.

The internal security force is the Directorate General of Surveillance and Territorial Security (Dirección General de Vigilancia y Seguridad Territorial, DGVST), which replaced the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (Dirección de Inteligencia y Seguridad, DIS) and represents Interpol in Costa Rica.

The political parties and the wealthier landowners maintain their own unofficial, plain-clothes paramilitary forces.

Dirección de Inteligencia y Seguridad, Apartado Postal 5/203, Zapote, San José

OPERATIONS

With some of the highest civic standards in the continent the law enforcement agencies have a comparatively easy task, although petty theft in the cities and tourist areas is on the increase, and there has been a recent escalation in drug traffic. Political and civil disturbances are uncommon.