



**U. Desmond Alufohai**  
Director

Protocol & International Affairs Division  
Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD)

## The Republic of The Gambia



**Head of State:** President Adama Barrow (since Jan 2022)  
**Population:** 2.46 million  
**Capital City:** Banjul (called Bathurst until 1973)  
**Independence Day:** February 18, 1965 (from the UK)  
**Currency:** Dalasi

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim merchants established some of [The Gambia's](#) earliest large settlements as trans-Saharan trade hubs. These settlements eventually grew into major export centers sending slaves, gold, and ivory across the Sahara.

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, European colonial powers began establishing trade with The Gambia. In 1664, the UK established a colony in The Gambia focused on exporting enslaved people across the Atlantic. During the roughly 300 years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the UK and other European powers may have exported as many as 3 million people from The Gambia.

The Gambia gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1965. Geographically surrounded by Senegal, it formed the short-lived confederation of Senegambia between 1982 and 1989. In 1994, Yahya Jammeh led a military coup overthrowing the president and banning political activity. He subsequently won every presidential election until 2016, when he lost to Mr. Adama Barrow, who headed an opposition coalition during free and fair elections. Mr. Barrow won reelection in December 2021. Since the 2016 election, The Gambia and the U.S. have enjoyed improved relations. U.S. assistance has supported democracy-strengthening activities, capacity building, economic development, and security sector.

### Did you know?

The Gambia is one of the friendliest and safest places to visit in the world. The country's economy is heavily reliant on its tourism sector because of its hospitable and welcoming citizens. Also, it has earned the nickname '*The smiling Coast.*'

As of 2023, there are [two properties inscribed on the World Heritage List](#): Kunta Kinteh Island (James Island) and Related Sites (2003), and the Stone Circles of Senegambia (2006). Jufureh (Juffere) is the reputed ancestral village of Kunta Kinte, the main character in Alex Haley's well-known novel Roots. The Senegambian stone circles or the Wassu stone circles are groups of megalithic stone circles that lie in The Gambia north of Janjanbureh and in central Senegal. There are over 1000 stone circles and tumuli spread across an area 350 km (220 mi) long and 100 km (62 mi) wide. The Senegambian stone circles are the largest concentration of stone circles seen anywhere in the world.

The Gambia is one of two countries in the world referred to with the article – "The." The Commonwealth of The Bahamas is the other nation. The country is named for the Gambia river that flows through the heart of the nation and it is Africa's smallest non island country.

The Gambia is the only member of the Economic Community of West African States that does not have presidential term limits. **Gambians vote using marbles.** During elections, Gambians vote using marbles by going inside a private booth, with holes in the ground marked with each candidate. They then simply drop their marble into the hole of the candidate they choose.

Bissap is the nation's most populous drink. Blood-red and almost impossibly sweet, [bissap or wonjo](#) (also known as hibiscus tea or sorrel drink) is an infused herbal tea made from the petals and flowers of the hibiscus plant. Typically flavored with ginger or mint, it makes for a refreshing mid-day beverage. Studies suggest that it also may reduce blood pressure and hypertension.

The Kachikally crocodile pool is in the heart of Bakau, Gambia, about 10 miles (16km) from the capital Banjul. It is one of three sacred crocodile pools used as sites for fertility rituals. The others are Folonko in Kombo South and Berending on the north bank. The Gambia takes pride in having more than 500 species of birds in the world living in six protected areas. Which makes it a paradise for bird lovers and watchers.

Sources: [Britannica.com](#); [CIAWorldFactbook.com](#); [Travelnoire.com](#).

Leap years are years where an extra day is added to the end of the shortest month, [February](#). This so-called *intercalary* day, February 29, is commonly referred to as [leap day](#). Leap days keep our calendar in alignment with Earth's revolutions around the Sun. If we didn't add a leap day on February 29 almost every four years, each calendar year would begin about 6 hours earlier in relation to Earth's revolution around the Sun. Leap days fix that error by giving Earth the additional time it needs to complete a full circle around the Sun.

We are certain you will enjoy our featured article about the Republic of The Gambia. I was fascinated with the voting system in The Gambia! We take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Omar Suárez Rodríguez, new Consul of Economic and Commercial Affairs at the Consulate General of Mexico in Miami.

We celebrate the Annual National Black History Month and the achievements and contributions of African Americans. We invite you to join [PSOW® flagship Protocol Officer Training Course](#), in Miami, Florida, April 22-26, 2024. This is a unique opportunity to enhance your professional development skills while training at one of the premier global gateways to the world. We salute all nations celebrating their independence or national day in February.

As always, please be safe.

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# DIPLOMATIC & CONSULAR RELATIONS

## Meet the new Consul for Economic & Commercial Affairs at the Consulate General of Mexico in Miami



**Mr. Omar Suárez Rodríguez** is the new Consul for Economic and Commercial Affairs at the Consulate General of Mexico in Miami. Below are highlights of his career:

July 2023 – present: Consul for Economic and Commercial Affairs at the Consulate General of Mexico in Miami.

January 2022 – June 2023: General Director in the Administration and Finance Unit at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

December 2018 – December 2021: Deputy Director of Human Resources and Foreign Service at the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs.

June 2016 – June 2018: Administrative Director at the Contentious Court of Mexico City.

February 2014 – May 2016: Administrative Director at the Chief Accounting Officer of the Treasury of Mexico City.

He obtained a bachelor's degree in administration and marketing and Master in Institutional Communications from Universidad Panamericana.

### Additional Skills

Conflict resolution, teamwork, and communications.

## Register now for PSOW's Protocol Officer Training (In-Person Course, April 22 - 26, 2024)



We are excited to announce that [The Protocol School of Washington®](https://www.psow.edu) (PSOW) is partnering with the [Protocol and International Affairs Division](#), Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) to bring the flagship [Protocol Officer Training Course](#), to the Miami, Florida, the Magic City **April 22-26, 2024**. This is a rare and unique opportunity to enhance your professional development skills while training at Miami International Airport, one of the premier global gateways to the world.

[Miami International Airport](#) (MIA) reached a new historic passenger record of more than 52.3 million travelers in 2023. MIA is the fastest growing airport in the United States and the second-fastest-growing in the world in airline seats since 2019. MIA is becoming [Future Ready](#) with its [Modernization In Action](#)

Plan launched under the leadership of the Honorable Daniella Levine Cava, Mayor of Miami-Dade County.

This five-day in-person classroom training provides expert instruction, guided exercises and coaching for thorough foundation in the fundamentals of operational protocol. Participants would gain a broad understanding of functional business, government, and international protocol.

Participants will receive the full PSOW certificate program that includes:

- \* Your official framed certificate
- \* Honor & Respect: The Official Guide to Names, and Forms of Address (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2013,) by Robert Hickey
- \* The Little Book of Etiquette by Dorothea Johnson (1997), Running Press
- \* PSOW Official Training Manual
- \* Global Road Warrior Digital Subscription.

Additionally, a light breakfast and lunch are provided each day, plus a private invitation to a cocktail reception and dinner hosted by the Protocol & International Affairs Division, Miami-Dade Aviation Department.

**The course is open to the public.** Join us for this special five-day training in Paradise. Please visit [www.psow.edu](https://www.psow.edu) or follow the link below for program details and to register for this course. <https://www.psow.edu/product?catalog=Protocol-Officer-Training-April-2024>.

# MIA REACHES UNPRECEDENTED HEIGHTS



[Miami International Airport \(MIA\) soared to unprecedented heights in 2023](#), marking a historic year of accomplishments in passenger and cargo traffic, as well as substantial investments in maintenance and capital improvements. Audited reports recently released confirm that MIA achieved its highest-ever annual passenger total, **handling 52.3 million travelers in 2023**, for an impressive 3.2% increase over the previous year's record. Notably, international travel experienced an exceptional 8.5% surge, reaching 23.2 million passengers, while domestic traffic, though slightly down by half a percent, still accounted for 29.1 million travelers.

The stellar performance in passenger numbers was primarily fueled by American Airlines, MIA's hub carrier, which contributed significantly by serving 31.4 million passengers in 2023. American Airlines also demonstrated its commitment to MIA's growth by increasing its year-over-year seat capacity by 10% during the winter 2023 schedule, resulting in a record-breaking 390 peak-day flights. In addition to the record-setting achievements in passenger traffic, MIA welcomed service launches by notable carriers such as Volaris El Salvador, Norse Atlantic Airways, and Porter Airlines, expanding its portfolio to an impressive 96 passenger and cargo airlines - the highest among all U.S. airports.

Cargo operations at MIA also reached new heights in 2023, registering a 1% growth to achieve a record-breaking 2.78 million tons. This accomplishment was driven by 2.2 million tons of international cargo and 548,976 tons of domestic shipments. Additionally, 2023 marked the third consecutive year that MIA handled more than 2.7 million tons of cargo. Amidst the passenger milestones, MIA also received historic investments in its infrastructure and maintenance needs throughout 2023 from an unprecedented \$7-billion [Capital Improvement Program](#) and a \$1.7-billion maintenance modernization plan. Mayor Levine Cava's Future-Ready initiative guided the implementation of the [Modernization in Action \(M.I.A.\) Plan](#) last year, outlining critical investment areas and ensuring transparency with the public.

“The enduring success of MIA as a global gateway and Miami's status as a premier tourism destination shines through in our remarkable achievement of a second consecutive record-breaking year. The significant investments in infrastructure and maintenance in 2023 reflect MIA's commitment to staying at the forefront. My heartfelt congratulations and gratitude extend to our valued airport partners and the tireless MIA workforce. Together, they have propelled our county's largest economic engine to new heights in 2023, making this achievement a testament to collective dedication and excellence.”

- Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava.

“As MIA continues to set new benchmarks, the airport remains dedicated to providing unparalleled services, connectivity, and economic contributions to the region. The collaboration between MIA, our airline partners, and the workforce ensures a bright future for MIA as a premier global gateway.”

- Ralph Cutié, MIA Director and CEO.

*Miami International Airport, America's busiest airport for international freight and the second busiest for international passengers, is receiving an [unprecedented investment](#) of \$7 billion in capital improvements and \$1.7 billion in maintenance upgrades. MIA offers more flights to Latin America and the Caribbean than any other U.S. airport and is also the leading economic engine for Miami-Dade County and the state of Florida, generating business revenue of \$31.9 billion and approximately 60 percent of all international visitors to Florida annually.*

## About Airports ... Did you know?

**Big and small:** The largest airport by land area is King Fahd International Airport in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, nearly 300 square miles. It is bigger than the entire country of Bahrain! Meanwhile, the smallest commercial runway belongs to Juancho E. Yrausquin Airport on the Dutch Caribbean Island of Saba, has a runway of 400 meters / 1300 feet, making landings quite the adventure.

**Lost and found treasures:** Unclaimed luggage gets auctioned after a while. Airports also donate unclaimed items to charities.

**Nature escapes:** Singapore's Changi Airport boasts a butterfly garden with over 1,000 fluttering friends, while London's Heathrow uses bird distress calls to keep runways clear.

**Air traffic control giants:** Thailand's New Bangkok International Airport boasts the world's tallest tower at 434 feet, as tall as a 40-story building!

**Sand runway:** Barra Airport in Scotland uses a beach as its runway, with schedules depending on the tides!

**Bird control:** Airports employ various methods to keep feathered friends away from planes, from trained falcons to loudspeakers with bird distress calls.

**Delayed "secrets":** Airlines and airports work together to adjust arrival times slightly, making airlines appear more punctual than they might be!

**Bonus fact:** The oldest continuously operated airport in the world is College Park Airport in Maryland, USA, established in 1909 by Wilbur Wright himself!



# BRIEFS & NOTES



## National Black History Month 2024

President Biden issued a Proclamation on National Black History Month, 2024, stating that “we celebrate the vast contributions of Black Americans to our country and recognize that Black history is American history, and that Black culture, stories, and triumphs are at the core of who we are as a Nation.” [Click here to view the entire Presidential Proclamation.](#)

Below are some African Americans that made vast contributions to our country:



**Guion “Guy” Bluford** made history on August 30, 1983, when he became the [first African American in space](#), launching into low Earth orbit aboard the Space Shuttle *Challenger*. He subsequently flew aboard three additional shuttle missions, logging a total of 688 hours in space. Before joining NASA, he flew F-4C fighters for the Air Force in Vietnam and completed 144 combat missions. “I wanted to set the standard, do the best job possible so that other people would be comfortable with African Americans flying in space and African Americans would be proud of being participants in the space program and ... encourage others to do the same.” - Guion Bluford.

**George Crum (1824-1914):** Crum, a chef and restaurateur, is said to have [unintentionally created](#) the **potato chip** during the summer of 1853. They were made in response to a customer who sent back their fried potatoes after complaining they were too thick. The crisps were an instant hit, and though Crum never patented the creations.

**Frederick McKinley Jones (1893-1961):** Jones left his mark with the development of **refrigeration equipment**, receiving over 40 patents for it. In the 1930s, he began inventing automatic refrigerated air-cooling units for trucks, trains, ships, and planes, which helped the preservation of food. His creation, [the Thermo King](#), allowed people to eat fresh food year-round. His work also contributed to the preservation of blood and medicine, proving to be particularly useful during WWII. In 1991, he became the first African American to receive the National Medal of Technology.

**Granville T. Woods (1856-1910):** Woods [accumulated almost 60 patents](#) during his lifetime, many of which improved the functioning of railroads. One of his [most notable](#) was the **induction telegraph system**, which allowed traveling trains to communicate with one another while also allowing workers to locate them.

**George Washington Carver (1864-1943):** So many of us know George W. Carver as the man famous for giving us peanut butter, but he’s responsible for much more. As [an agricultural chemist](#), in an effort to increase the profitability of sweet potatoes and peanuts, Carver began conducting experiments in 1896 and created 518 new products from the crops. **They include ink, dye, soap, cosmetics, flour, vinegar, and synthetic rubber.** He publicly revealed his experiments in 1914.

**Madam C.J. Walker (1867-1919):** She was the first African American woman to become a self-made millionaire after creating a line of **hair products** geared toward Black hair. (She created the first, Madam Walker’s Wonderful Hair Grower, in 1905.)

**Garrett Morgan (1877-1963):** It’s safe to say that Garrett Morgan’s most prominent original designs have saved thousands of lives since their invention. [Take his traffic signal](#), which he patented in 1922. It was the first to offer a third “caution” signal, which we now know as the yellow light. And in 1912, Morgan received a patent for his “**Breathing Device**,” which was one of the earliest versions of a gas mask.

**Alexander Miles (1838-1918):** Another innovation that contributed to saving lives was Alexander Miles’s **elevator design**. Before him, elevators were operated manually; people had to physically open and close the doors of both the elevator and the shaft every time. Miles realized the constant hazard this posed when riding on an elevator with the shaft door open with his daughter. In 1887, he obtained the patent for his invention, including a flexible belt attached to the elevator cage, allowing the doors to function automatically. He was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2007.

**Percy Lavon Julian (1899-1975):** American chemist Percy Lavon Julian [made various vital contributions](#) to modern medicine as a result of experimenting with soybeans. He [synthesized a drug called physostigmine](#), which is used to treat glaucoma. Julian also discovered how to mass produce cortisone and the steroid progesterone, which was used to produce sex hormones.

**Marie Van Brittan Brown (1922-1999):** Brown filed a patent in 1966 for the first-ever home security system after wanting to [increase her own house’s security](#) in her Queens, New York, neighborhood. Her original design contained a camera, a two-way microphone, peepholes, and monitors, all serving as the foundations for today’s modern systems.

**Shirley Jackson (born 1946):** Jackson, the first African American woman to earn a doctorate at MIT, is [responsible for monumental telecommunications research](#) that led to the invention of products such as the touch-tone phone, portable fax, fiber optic cables, and caller ID. In 2014, President Barack Obama named her the co-chair of the President’s Intelligence Advisory.

**Mark Dean (born 1957):** Dean, who earned his doctorate at Stanford University and his master’s at Florida Atlantic University, is [a co-inventor of IBM’s original personal computer](#) and [the color PC monitor](#), literally changing how we all interact with the internet. As for [the technology](#) that allows keyboards, printers, and more to communicate with your computer? He is also one of the people behind it.

**Dr. Patricia E. Bath (1942-2019):** Bath was a prolific ophthalmologist, research scientist, and laser scientist who studied both domestically and globally, and [is known for](#) her significant contributions to the medical field—including fighting against blindness. We also have her to thank for a new area of focus called “community ophthalmology,” which helps provide marginalized groups around the world with the eye care they need. Sources: [Oprah Daily](#); [Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum](#)

# BRIEFS & NOTES

## Fun Facts about Leap Day Birthdays



The Leap Year and extra day (Leap Day) was instituted officially in 1582 with the Gregorian calendar (though it dates to ancient Egyptian times) due to the amount of time it takes the earth to go around the sun, and as a measure to help keep the seasons occurring at the same time every year. February 29 only comes around once every four years. Below are some fun facts for those born on a leap day:

\* Delivering a baby on a leap day is something very special! It is also the rarest birthday of them all. Only about 5 million people worldwide were born on February 29. You have a 1 in 1,461 chance of giving birth on Leap Day.

- \* People born on Leap Day are called "leaplings" or "leapers." Your child can connect with other leaplings through the [Honor Society of Leap Year Day Babies](#) or on social media.
- \* Leapers choose when to celebrate their birthday. They often choose either February 28 or March 1. Some leapers are loyal to February, while others argue that they can't celebrate one day before they existed and go with March 1.
- \* Most leapers think about their "actual" age as well as their quadrennial age. So, while they may be 32 years old, they've only had eight actual birthdays, making them technically 8 years old!
- \* [Anthony, Texas is known as the Leap Year Capitol of the World](#). It was declared the Leap Year Capitol of the U.S. in 1988, during the second session of the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress. The city throws a giant festival every Leap Year where people come from all around the world to celebrate their February 29<sup>th</sup> birthday and to enjoy live music, attractions for kids, local eats, craft vendors, and more.
- \* Because not all technology systems have caught up, leapers may experience hassles and difficulties with recognition of their birth date. Sometimes, drop down menus do not have February 29 as a choice, and birthday loyalty programs may not have a way to recognize Leap Day birthdays in non-Leap Years. Also, some leaplings are questioned about their birthday, thinking it is a mistake.
- \* There's a special leap year cocktail for parents to enjoy. Created by Harry Craddock for February 29 festivities at London's Savoy Hotel in 1928, [this concoction](#) contains gin, sweet vermouth, Grand Marnier, and lemon juice. If you like it, you don't have to wait four years to enjoy it again.
- \* Many leapers go "all out" with celebrations. If your little one is turning 4, 8, 12, or 16, it's time to do it up! Even adult leapers have carte blanche to go wild—can you blame them since they only get a "real" birthday every four years? The next leap years will be in 2028, 2032, and 2036 which are a long way away, so that's definitely cause to celebrate this February 29!
- \* Leap Day is considered unlucky in some cultures. In Scotland, it's said that being born on a leap day will lead to a life of bad luck. The Greeks deem a leap year an unlucky time to get married, as the union is doomed to end in divorce. Not every culture shares these superstitions though. Indeed, many people think February 29 brings [good fortune!](#)

Sources: [Lamaze.org](#); [Perents.com](#).

## Flowers: Mothers Day vs. Valentines Day

[Mother's Day](#) and [Valentine's Day](#) are two of the most important events of the year for the flower industry, accounting for a significant spike in flower demand. However, which one is the biggest? To understand this, it is important to recognize the distinct characteristics that separate these occasions and their varying flower needs. According to reports by the [Society of American Florists](#) (SAF), Valentine's Day ranked [number one](#) in flower sales generating approximately [\\$2.3 billion](#) in revenue, i.e., [28%](#) of the floral sales volume in 2022. However, Mother's Day was not far behind, ranking fourth and accounting for an estimated [24%](#) of floral revenue that year.

Despite a comparatively lower sales volume in the US, Mother's Day is still considered the [Superbowl for Florists](#). It is a universally beloved holiday officially celebrated in over 90 countries on the second Sunday of May, which makes the consumer base much broader to cover multiple demographics. While Valentine's Day will always be the day for lovers, it has become more inclusive in recent years. Many now use this occasion to appreciate other forms of affection, including non-romantic relationships between friends and family members. Those most likely to buy fresh flowers on Valentine's Day included:

- \* Adults ages 18 – 34 (33%)
- \* Men (28%)
- \* Married (26%)
- \* Children in a household (38%)

### Miami International Airport Receives 90% of All Flowers to the U.S.

MIA receives 90.5 percent of all flowers imported to the U.S., primarily from South America, for a total of 370,946 tons valued at over \$1.74 billion annually. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agriculture specialists meticulously inspect flower imports to ensure they are pest-free before reaching sweethearts nationwide. During the peak import season in January 2023, MIA received a total of 48,063 tons of flower imports, or an average of 1,550 tons per day, at a total value of \$222.5 million. Flower imports increased by 12% last season compared to the previous year, and this year is expected to be another record year.

Sources: [Miami's Community News](#); [Fresh-O-Fair](#)

# BRIEFS & NOTES

## History of Valentine's Day



According to Roman legend, during the third century, Valentinus was imprisoned for his Christian beliefs and sentenced to death. While jailed, Valentinus restored the sight of his jailer's blind daughter. The night before he died, Valentinus wrote a farewell note to the girl, which he signed, "From Your Valentine." His sentence was carried out the next day, February 14, 269 A.D. Hundreds of years later in fifth century Rome, people honored Juno, the pagan goddess of love and marriage, on February 14. During the celebration, men would draw women's names and court them for marriage. Around 498 A.D., Pope Gelasius declared February 14 as St. Valentine's Day to honor the martyr Valentinus and to end the pagan celebration.

### The World's Oldest Valentine's Day Card

The earliest surviving romantic Valentine missive also has French origins. It was written by Charles, Duke of Orleans while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, after being captured by the English during the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. Written to his wife Bonne of Armagnac, the love poem repeats phrases using "Valentine" as a term of endearment several times:

*"Je suis desja d'amour tanné; Ma tres douce Valentinée."*

This French prose translates to "I am already sick of love, My very gentle Valentine" in English. Sadly, the Duke's wife died before receiving the words of love of her imprisoned husband and today his words reside in the British Library. Also found in the British Library is the earliest known English language example of a Valentine. Dating to February 1477, the love letter was written by Margery Brews to her fiancé John Paston. Margery refers to John as her "right well-beloved Valentine" and beseeches him to marry her despite the fact she hasn't been able to convince her father to increase her dowry.

Another of the earliest literary references to Valentine's Day is found in the works of British playwright William Shakespeare. While Shakespeare *did* write some epic romances (like Romeo & Juliet), his Valentine's Day reference is found in a work whose main plot focuses on something very different: revenge. In *Hamlet*, written around 1600, Ophelia sings in Act IV scene 5 to the King: "*To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day, All in the morning betime, And I a maid at your window, To be your Valentine.*" This Shakespeare verse referred to a belief of the time that the first woman a man saw on St. Valentine's Day would be his true love.

By the 1660s, when Samuel Pepys wrote repeatedly of Valentine's Day in [his famous diaries](#), high class Londoners were treating the belief as more lighthearted fun than a search for true love. In 1661, Pepys describes the choosing of Valentines at a Valentine's Day eve party with friends, followed by early morning visits by the men of the party to claim their "Valentine" as "very merry". In the following days, small gifts were bestowed on the Valentines as part of the merry making. Pepys recorded a shopping excursion with his wife and Valentine, Mrs. Batten, a few days after Valentine's Day that year, during which he gifted her with several sets of gloves.

### The Mother of the American Valentine

Esther Howland, whose father owned the largest stationery store in Worcester, Massachusetts, is nicknamed the "Mother of the American Valentine" and credited with creating the first mass market printed Valentines in the U.S. In 1849, Howland designed a line of Valentine's Day cards after being inspired by one sent to her from England. Howland's cards, featuring lace cut-outs and intricate illustrations, were assembled in her home by a bevy of local ladies that she hired. Because Howland's Valentines used papers and illustrations imported from Europe with the help of her father's stationery business, her cards were very different than other Valentines already on the U.S. market at the time.

At the peak of her success, Howland was selling as much as \$100,000 per year in Valentine's cards with distribution across the country. Eventually, Howland's operation became known as the New England Valentine Company. The company remained a home-based operation until the mid-1870s when it moved production into its first factory. In 1881, New England Valentine Company was purchased from Esther Howland by George Whitney, who owned a competing Valentine company, and Howland retired from entrepreneurship to become a caregiver for her ailing father.

Ms. Howland is who we owe our thanks to when it comes to a pivotal movement in Valentine's Day cards. Since the days of her female-led business empire, Valentine's Day has forever been linked to card giving.

### Hallmark Valentines

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and beyond), the name Hallmark has become synonymous with Valentines for many Americans. Hallmark – or Hall Bros. as it was then called - sold [its first Valentine's Day cards](#) in 1913. Those initial postcard designs were purchased from another company, and in 1916 the company began producing its own Valentine's Day card designs.

Sources: [Hallmark.com](http://Hallmark.com); [Scrapebook.com](http://Scrapebook.com).

## INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL DAYS (FEBRUARY)

**February 4, 1948 – Sri Lanka:** British Ceylon gained independence from Great Britain on February 4, 1948. When it became a republic on May 22, 1972, it was renamed the Republic of Sri Lanka.

**February 7, 1974 – Grenada:** After becoming a self-governing state in association with the United Kingdom in 1967, Grenada became an independent nation on February 7, 1974.

**February 11, 1929 – Holy See (Vatican City):** On this date, the Holy See signed three treaties with Italy that acknowledged its full sovereignty and established its territorial extent. Currently, its National Day is celebrated on March 13, the election day of Pope Francis.

**February 13, 1913 – Tibet:** After Tibetan troops had driven out the soldiers of the collapsing Manchu (Qing) Dynasty, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama proclaimed independence from China on February 13, 1913. The Chinese never accepted this proclamation, and in 1949, it reoccupied the Himalayan region. Tibet is currently an autonomous area within the People's Republic of China but continues to fight for its independence.

**February 15, 1804 – Serbia:** Although Serbia gained independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on June 5, 2006, its National Day, known as Statehood Day is celebrated on 15 February. It marks two historical events, the beginning of the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 and the adoption of the First Serbian Constitution in 1835.

**February 16, 1918 – Lithuania:** On February 16, 1918 Lithuania gained independence from Soviet Russia and Germany; a day known as Restoration of the State Day. Lithuanians celebrate a second national day: March 11, Restoration of Independence Day, marking the day in 1990 when Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union.

**February 17, 2008 – Kosovo:** On this date, the Kosovo Assembly unanimously voted to declare independence from Serbia.

**February 18, 1965 – Republic of The Gambia:** The Gambia, the smallest country within mainland Africa and a British Crown colony and protectorate, gained independence from Great Britain on February 18, 1965. It remained a constitutional monarchy within the Commonwealth until it became a republic on April 24, 1970.

**February 22, 1979 – St. Lucia:** After being contested between the French and British throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, St. Lucia became a British Crown colony in 1814. On February 22, 1979, it gained full independence, choosing to remain within the Commonwealth as a parliamentary democracy.

**February 23 – Japan:** Since Emperor Naruhito ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne on May 1, 2019, Japan has celebrated February 23 as its National Day to honor the Emperor who was born on February 23, 1960.

**February 24, 1918 – Estonia:** Estonia celebrates two independence days: Independence Day on February 24; the day they declared independence from Soviet Russia in 1918, and Restoration of Independence Day, on 20 August; the day they declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

**February 25, 1963 – Kuwait:** Under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah, Kuwait gained independence from Britain on June 19, 1961. Starting in 1963, National Day celebrations were moved to February 25 to avoid the prevailing summer heat. The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Sheikh's coronation in 1950.

**February 27, 1844 – Dominican Republic:** On this date, Dominicans seized the fortress of Puerta del Conde and drove the Haitian army out of Santo Domingo. Since this day marked a turning point in the nation's history, it is celebrated annually as its Independence Day.

### ABOUT US

The core mission of MDAD's Protocol and International Affairs Division is -

*To facilitate the movement of official guests, delegations, dignitaries and VIPs through MIA and support the airport's international programs and initiatives.*

**Contact:**

**Tel:** + 1 (305) 876-7457

**Email:** [Protocol@FlyMIA.com](mailto:Protocol@FlyMIA.com)

**URL:** [https://www.iFlyMIA.com/protocol\\_international\\_affairs.asp](https://www.iFlyMIA.com/protocol_international_affairs.asp)

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