



Nagorno-Karabakh

Status: Self-Proclaimed Republic in Southern Caucasus
Area: 2,700 sq. miles (estimate)
Population: 137,737 (2005 census)
Currency: Armenian Dram (474 Drams = US\$1)



Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous enclave about the size of Delaware in the southern Caucasus. For about 600 years the area was a part of Armenia. Since 387 AD it was at least nominally under Persian rule until 1813 when Czar Alexander I conquered it for the expanding Russian Empire. Its location in the rugged Lesser Caucasus Mountains has allowed its people to preserve considerable autonomy throughout its history.



The Stepanakert Post Office in Nagorno-Karabakh sells stamps and handles local mail.

After the October Revolution, Russian troops withdrew from Transcaucasia and in 1918 three former Russian states declared their independence. This brief interlude was marred by fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over control of territory including Nagorno-Karabakh. The Red Army ended this armed struggle when it crossed over the Caucasus and the three Transcaucasian states became Soviet Republics. In 1923, despite Armenian objections, Moscow made Nagorno-Karabakh an autonomous oblast within Azerbaijan.

In 1988, as the Soviet Union weakened, the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute again surfaced. Ar-

menians in Nagorno-Karabakh began to agitate for union with Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Russian efforts to restore control were fruitless. On September 2, 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence and full-scale warfare ensued with Azerbaijan. Armenians held Nagorno-Karabakh and doubled the territory it controlled. A cease-fire was signed on February 18, 1994. Although nominally independent, Nagorno-Karabakh has a very close political relationship with Armenia. The international community does not recognize the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and de jure, it is considered a part of Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh issued its first postage stamps on June 11, 1993. It has a functioning postal system and its stamps are used by the public. Its foreign mail enters the international mail stream through Armenia. The *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* does not list these stamps, though they are listed in major European catalogs, including Michel and Stanley Gibbons.



A 2010 issue shows a Christian church building.



A commemorative celebrating independence, Michel 3.



The Karabakh horse, Michel 39.



A 2013 Europa issue features a mail truck.



Columnist Bob Lamb during his visit to the Nagorno-Karabakh post office.



A postcard sent to the United States with a 2016 Wildlife Conservation stamp featuring a long-eared hedgehog.