

British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)

Overview:

The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) is an overseas dependent territory of the United Kingdom that was established in 1965. The BIOT is comprised of six main island groups called the Chagos Archipelago. The largest and most southerly of the islands, Diego Garcia, is now used as a joint UK-US military base and the remaining islands are uninhabited. A number of the BIOT islands were transferred to the Seychelles when it attained independence in 1976. In 1966, Britain and the United States signed an "Exchange of Notes concerning the availability for Defence Purposes" of the islands. As a result the US was leased the islands for fifty years, with an option for another twenty, without payment, in exchange for a fourteen million dollar discount off the price of Polaris missiles. The Americans built a military base and demanded that all the inhabitants of the islands be removed. Over the eight years between the establishment of the territory in 1965 and 1973 all 2000 or so residents were relocated to Mauritius or the Seychelles. In 2000, a British High Court ruling invalidated the local immigration order that had excluded them from the archipelago and awarded the displaced islanders four million pounds in compensation. However, the special military status of Diego Garcia was upheld and islanders continue to be refused access to their homeland.

Territory:

an archipelago of 52 islands 1900 km (1187 mi.) north-east of Mauritius at the southern end of a chain of sea mounts that include Lakshadweep and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean. The largest and only inhabited island is Diego Garcia, a tropical footprint-shaped island, hence the name "Footprint of Freedom" dubbed by the US military, just 7 degrees south of the equator. The island is 6720 acres in area with a maximum height of 22 feet (6.6 meters) and an average elevation of 4 feet above sea level. The shoreline is approximately 64 km (40 mi.) long and the island encloses a lagoon 10.4 km (6.5 mi.) wide and 20.8 km (13 mi.) long. Highest Elevation: 49.5 feet (15 meters) Coastline: 698 km

Location:

Located in the Indian Ocean about half way between Africa and Indonesia.

Latitude and Longitude:

6 00 S Latitude and 71 30 E

Time Zone:

GMT +5

Total Land Area:

60

EEZ:

Climate:

tropical marine which is moderated by northeast trade winds. High humidity. Annual mean temperature 27 _ C. /76 _ F., rainfall <120 inches (although this can vary greatly). Wet season is from November to April and the dry season is from May to November. The region is occasionally hit by cyclones.

Natural Resources:

coconuts, fish, sugarcane

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:

Per Capita GDP:

% of GDP per Sector:		
Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

% of Population Employed by Sector		
Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

External Aid/Remittances:

Exports: Partners: US, UK, Mauritius, Seychelles, Philippines Imports: Partners: US, UK, Mauritius, Seychelles

Growth:

Although the British Indian Ocean Territory is leased to the US, construction and development of the land is regulated by the British government. All projects must be approved before construction may commence. Following the Exchange of Notes Agreement in 1966 the US began construction of a Naval Communications Facility on Diego Garcia. On January 23, 1971, 9 American Seabees from NMCB-40 landed on the island to perform a preliminary survey on beach landing areas. An additional 50 Seabees from Amphibious Construction Battalion II landed on the island and marked underwater obstructions, installed temporary navigational aids and cleared beach areas for landing additional personnel and materials. On March 20 1971, an additional party of 160 Seabees from NMCB-40 arrived. Construction for the US Naval Communication Facility was started four days later and a transmitter and receiver buildings were quickly constructed. On December 25, 1971, the first C-141J transport plane landed on the newly constructed 6000 foot runway with the Bob Hope Christmas Troupe. In December 1972, a pre-commissioning Detachment arrived to prepare the Naval Communication Station for operations. On March 20, 1973, the US Naval Communication Station, Diego Garcia was commissioned. The name of the communications facility was later changed to the Naval Computer and Telecommunication Station (NCTS) in October of 1991. In late 1973 phase two of the development project began: a \$6.1 million plan that included the construction of a ship channel and a turning basin in the lagoon. This project was contracted to a Taiwanese firm. Seabees continued to work on support and personnel facilities in the cantonment area at the northern tip of the atoll. The major area of construction was the airfield and its supporting facilities. Revised requirements called for the extension of the original 6000 foot runway to 12,000 feet and additions were made to the parking apron and taxiways. New hangars and other support facilities were also built. In 1975 and 1976, the US Congress authorized another \$28.6 million to expand the facilities on Diego Garcia in order to provide logistics support for US task groups

Official Currency:
US Dollar



Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:
Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:
Number of Insurance Companies:

A Navy Federal Credit Union and a Community Bank are located on the island of Diego Garcia.

Financial Services:

Communications/E-Commerce:

state of the art. Limited government and military information available online. English.

Public Ownership:

all property is leased by the United States from the United Kingdom until 2016 with the potential to be extended until 2041.

Land Use:

arable land: 0% permanent crops: 0% other: 100%

Agriculture/Forestry:

Marine Activity:

Fishing:

Marine Life:

Critical Issues:

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES

Capital:

Country Name: British Indian Ocean Territory Previous Name: Oil Islands Capital: Diego Garcia

Political System:

parliamentary British overseas territory administered by a commissioner, resident in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Queen Elizabeth II has been the head-of-state since February 6, 1952, represented by Commissioner Tony Crombie since January 2004 and Administrator Charles A. Hamilton since 2002. Both reside in Britain. access to the islands is limited to US and UK military personnel and temporary contract workers. Admin. Divisions: none Legal System: English Common Law where applicable. US and UK military law where applicable. Judicial Branch: none Internal Government: The Crown's representative on the island, the British Representative (BRITREP), acts as both Justice of the Peace and Commanding Officer of the Royal Naval Party. There is also a local magistrate and judge for all legal matters dealing with British law. Under his cognizance are the British customs personnel, Royal Overseas Police Officers (ROPO) and a complement of Royal Marines, who patrol and protect the entire BIOT

Political Parties:

none There are no elections since the monarch is hereditary. A governor is appointed by the monarch. Internal Government: The Crown's representative on the island, the British Representative (BRITREP), acts as both Justice of the Peace and Commanding Officer of the Royal Naval Party. There is also a local magistrate and judge for all legal matters dealing with British law. Under his cognizance are the British customs personnel, Royal Overseas Police Officers (ROPO) and a complement of Royal Marines, who patrol and protect the entire BIOT

Important Legislation:

1965 – establishment of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) as a colony. Four island groups were originally part of the new colony, the Chagos Archipelago, Farquhar, Desroches and Aldabra. However, in 1976, the Seychelles won three of these regions back, Farquhar, Desroches and Aldabra as part of their independence. The BIOT now consists only of the islands located in the Chagos Archipelago British Overseas Territory Act: enacted 2002 (replaces the British Nationality Act 1981). The British Indian Ocean Territory is one of fourteen British overseas territories and is named in this Act. This Act replaces references to "dependent territory" with "British overseas territory" and renames "British Dependent Territories citizenship" as "British overseas territories citizenship." It also grants British citizenship to everyone who is a British overseas territories citizen (BOTC), at commencement (except for BOTC of the Sovereign Base Areas), and prescribes how a person who becomes a BOTC can acquire British citizenship by registration. In addition, the Act prescribes how a person can become a British citizenship by virtue of a connection with a British overseas territory (for example, by being born or adopted there). BOTC who become British citizens will retain their status as BOTC unless they renounce it, and they will be able to renounce British citizenship if they do not want it. Most British Dependent Territories citizens live in the West Indian overseas territories, Bermuda, St Helena, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. Some live outside the territories, including BDTC who are former inhabitants of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The British Government decided to include these persons in the offer of British citizenship following a judgment in the High Court in November 2000 which upheld their right to return to the British Indian Ocean Territory. The total number of BDTC is around 200,000. Exchange of Notes: enacted 1966, amended in 1972 This agreement includes 11 main sections and 2 annexes with more than 50 sub-paragraphs. It allows the United States to lease the islands of the Chagos Archipelago for 50 years with the option to extend this lease for another 25 years in order to build a Naval Communications Facility. This agreement ends in 2016 with the possibility of extension to 2041. Hattersley Agreement: enacted 1976 This agreement modifies the Exchange of Notes and allowed for the "limited" communications facility to evolve into a fully operational support facility of the United States Navy. Included in this agreement is the allowance for an anchorage, an airfield, support and supply elements and ancillary services, personnel, accommodations and transmitting and receiving services. It also specifies that permanent structures may be constructed.

Principal Taxes:

Associated Power:

United Kingdom Overseas Territory

Citizenship:

overseas territory of the UK, and member of the EU. Currently citizens of Britain's overseas territories, including The British Indian Ocean Territory are entitled to British citizenship. The British Overseas Territories Bill, passed in February 2002, provides automatic acquisition of British citizenship, including automatic transmission of citizenship to their children; the right of abode, including the right to live and work in the UK and the European Union (EU); the right not to exercise or to formally renounce British citizenship; and the right to use the fast track European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) channel at the airport, free of UK immigration controls. Although the former inhabitants of the islands' British citizenship was established in 2001 and they were given the right to return to the islands, the military lease continues to restrict their access.

Paradiplomacy:

none

HUMAN RESOURCES

3500

2004			
Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
British Indian Ocean Territory	60	4,000	100%

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
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Migration:

Crude Birth Rate:

Life Expedctancy:

Crude Death Rate:

Ethnicity:

British, American, Portuguese, Ilios

Class Division:

Languages:

English (official)

Religion:

Christian, a non-denominational chapel is located on Diego Garcia.

Literacy:

Education System:

Total Pre-schools:()	
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	
Second Level:	
Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	
Total Professional Schools	
Universities:	

Number of Schools per Island:										
	Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
	Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			



Medical Services:

Medical and dental facilities are inadequate and people who intentionally or unintentionally land on Diego Garcia may be transported for treatment to distant locations such as Mauritius or Seychelles, both of which are more than 1000 miles away.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

Diego Garcia, the largest island in the Chagos Archipelago, was discovered by Portuguese explorers in the early 1500s. The island's name is believed to have come from either the ship's captain or the navigator on that early voyage of discovery. The French assumed possession of the Chagos Archipelago in the late 18th century and began to harvest and sell copra, originally employing slave labour. By then, the Indian Ocean and its African, Arabian and Indian coasts had become a centre of rivalry between the Dutch, French and British East India companies for dominance over the spice trade and over the routes to India and the Far East. During the Napoleonic wars Britain captured Mauritius and Réunion from the French. Under the treaty of Paris in 1814, Britain restored Réunion to France, and France ceded to Britain Mauritius and its dependencies, which comprised Seychelles and the Chagos Archipelago. All these dependencies were administered from Mauritius until 1903, when the Seychelles group was detached to form a separate Crown Colony. In 1965 the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) was formed and the Chagos Archipelago was placed under the administrative control of the British government of the Seychelles. In 1976, the Seychelles gained independence from England and the BIOT became a self-administering territory under the East African Desk of the British Foreign Office. Until 1971, the islanders' main source of income was from the profitable copra oil plantation, which they sold as fine machine oil and fuel to light European lamps through a French-run copra and coconut oil company known as Chagos Agalega. Diego Garcia was also used as a coal station, and guano mining was carried out briefly. Over approximately 170 years coconut harvests remained relatively constant, and about four million nuts were harvested annually. The plantation years ended with the arrival of the US military when the more than 2000 islanders were forced from their land and relocated to Mauritius or Seychelles islands in order to make way for the US run naval support facility. All of the islands are now uninhabited other than Diego Garcia. Known as the "Footprint of Freedom," Diego Garcia plays a primary role in the support of US military units operating in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf. Diego Garcia became fully operational in 1986 with the completion of a \$500 million construction program. The 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait marked the most intense operational period in Diego Garcia's history. From 1 August 1990 to 28 February 1991, the Naval base in Diego Garcia achieved and maintained the highest degree of operational readiness and provided levels of support that far exceeded contingency planning. In addition, Diego Garcia became the only US Navy base that launched offensive air operations during Operation Desert Storm. Coalition aircraft on the island also dropped more ordnance on Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan than any other unit during the war on terror.

Referenda:

Recent Significant Events:

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

Sources:

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Institute of Island Studies
University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI)
550 University Ave
Charlottetown, PE, Canada, C1A 4P3

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