



Island History

Diego Garcia is an island in the Chagos Archipelago. The archipelago covers 22,000 square miles, and is located in the heart of the Indian Ocean. When the first European explorers in the early 1500's, there is debate on the origin of the two separate ship's captains laid claim to the discovery within the two captains last name's were used to name the island. Another source claims the complete name of one ship's captain or navigator.

Portugal's claim lapsed and in the early 1700's the island was ceded to France from Mauritius. France retained control until after the Napoleonic Wars when it was ceded to the British after the capture of Mauritius.

Until 1971, Diego Garcia's main source of income was from the coconut oil. This oil was used as fine machine lubricant and fuel to light lamps. The average harvest was about four million nuts annually. Some of the coconuts are preserved for their historical significance today.

In 1965, the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) was created as a separate area. In December of 1966, the United Kingdom and the United States agreed making the islands of the BIOT available for defense purposes.

Military History

On 23 January, 1971, a nine man advance party from NMCB-4 conducted a preliminary survey for beach landing areas. 50 additional Seabees from Battalion Two landed on the island and marked underwater navigational aids and cleared beach areas for landing additional supplies. In March, 1971 an additional party of 160 Seabees from NMCB-4 arrived. A Communication Facility Diego Garcia was started four days later and finished by NMCB-62. The Seabees also started construction of a **Communication Facility!**

In October and November of 1971, Detachment CHAGOS of N arrived, marking the beginning of large-scale construction. N buildings and placed the base course for the permanent runway. NMCB 62 relieved NMCB-1 and took over the departing batta C-141J transport landed on the newly completed 6,000 foot runway. Troupe!

During December 1972, a Pre-commissioning Detachment arrived at the Communication Station for operations. On 20 March, 1973 U.S. Diego Garcia was commissioned. The setting was sparse, but comm

Worked commenced on the second construction increment, a construction of a ship channel and turning basin in the lagoon to a Taiwanese firm. Seabees continued to work on support area at the northern tip of the atoll. The second major area of supporting facilities. Revised requirements called for the extension to 12,000 feet and additions were made to the parking apron and support facilities were also built. During 1973 and 1974 Seabees. Because the final mission of Diego Garcia was still evolving, it would take place in the years to come.

In 1975 and 1976 Congress authorized \$28.6 million to expand minimal logistics support for U.S. task groups operating in the area. Work was undertaken in 1978. World events in 1979 and 1980, however, changed the defense posture in the Indian Ocean Area which indicated the need to support a rapid deployment force and a more active U.S. presence. The Navy further expand the facilities at Diego Garcia in order to provide support for ships, loaded with critical supplies. By the end of 1980 the Navy advertised a \$100 million contract for initial dredging at Diego Garcia.

Thus, what began as simply a communication station on a remote island, became an armed forces support base by the 1980s. By 1983 the only Sealift command was a detachment of NMCB 62. The work the Seabees completed during the 1970s was the largest peacetime construction effort in their history. Diego Garcia construction effort of the 1970s and they acquitted themselves well to the conditions that exist there. When the Seabees arrived they lived in tents, they left a fully-developed, modern military facility, capable of supporting personnel.

Island Geography

Located at 6 00 S, 71 30 E in the southern hemisphere, the island has the harbor entrance opening to the north-northwest. The island encompasses 11 square miles. The highest point on the island

Island Climate

The climate on Diego Garcia is decidedly tropical. Average yearly rainfall is 65 inches, with the rainy season from September to March each year. Temperatures range from a high of 85 and a low of 65.