

3021 John Marshall Drive  
Arlington, Virginia 22207  
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Editor  
The Washington Post  
Washington

Dear Sir:

We have just won a war with the major assistance of our billion-dollar base at Diego Garcia - used therein for prepositioning Marine equipment, for supporting carrier and surface forces, and particularly as a base for repeated direct bombing missions by B-52's. It seems to me to be a good time to review whether we should now take steps to redress the inexcusably inhuman wrongs inflicted by the British at our instance on the former inhabitants of Diego Garcia and other Chagos group islands.

The costs would be trivial compared with what we invested in construction and what we gained. There is still a major opportunity, if we fail to do so, for the international embarrassment of the United States, if not for legal action through international bodies to attack our base rights there.

The attached report provides the relevant historical facts. Within my knowledge, I note only minor inaccuracies.

In May 1960, as civilian assistant director of CNO's Long Range Objectives Group, I was the individual who proposed the detachment of these islands from Mauritius, the establishment of the British Indian Ocean Territory, and the construction of a minor Navy logistic, patrol and communication facility at Diego Garcia. I would have done so even if I had realized that the inhabitants had a history of several generations there, and that the connection to Mauritius was more than a matter of mere British administrative convenience, as I believed at the time.

With Britain clearly destined to lose control of all other territories in the Indian Ocean area, it was essential for the U.S. to obtain long-term rights for basic facilities which would not require us to cozy up to incompatible dictatorial regimes such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Pakistan or the Gulf monarchies and sheikdoms, nor involve us in new commitments, nor impact large populations. Diego Garcia alone would qualify.

The USAF fought my idea to a standstill for some time, in the arrogant belief that it could always overfly or get bases wherever it wanted, but finally saw the light, and added Aldabra for its own use. Only much later, I think the late '70's, did USAF go for Diego for itself.

I retired from the Navy Department in 1970.

It is my firm opinion that there never was any good reason for evicting residents from the Northern Chagos, 100 miles or more from Diego Garcia. Probably the natives could even have been safely allowed to remain on the east side of Diego Garcia atoll, but the prevailing

nervousness about Soviet spying must be recognized. Now that spy satellites have taken over, and the Cold War is over, it would be safe to let them go back, to North Chagos certainly.

Such permission, for those who still want to return, together with resettlement assistance, would go a long way to reduce our deserved opprobrium. Substantial additional compensation for 18-25 past years of misery for all victims is certainly in order. Even if that were to cost \$100,000 per family, we would be talking of a maximum of \$40-50 million, modest compared with our base investment there, with the value derived from it, and with the costs of Philippine bases. If we are too poor to pay it, perhaps the Japanese or Germans or Saudismight suggest they would like to allocate some of their Persian Gulf contributions to it.

I don't really suppose the Post is up to juggling our Establishment on this one, but I thought it worth giving it a try. I don't have much more information to provide, but will be available. If you don't plan to go active on this, please return the enclosure so I can try it on someone else.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart B. Barber

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This is not intended for publication,  
but I would be glad to write something that is.