

DIEGO GARCIA

The Washington Post reports 9/9 that more than 1,000 inhabitants of the Island of Diego Garcia were forcibly removed before 1972 to make way for a U.S. Naval Base there. The Pentagon told the Congress in 1972 that the Island was virtually uninhabited. The U.S. Government ( State Department ) has said that the fate of the islanders now living in poverty on Mauritius is the responsibility of the United Kingdom and Mauritius.

Q. Would you comment on the Post story on the inhabitants of Diego Garcia? Will the U.S. do anything to help them or to repay them for their losses and displacement?

A. I would refer you to the Department of State and also the Department of Defense. I understand they are prepared to address this issue.

Q. Is the Island of Diego Garcia independent territory?

A. The island is British.

FYI ONLY: We want to keep this issue away from the White House and the President since it would involve putting the British out front on this. The State Department will refer to the British jurisdiction on Diego Garcia and to their responsibility for administration of the island. They will probably direct most queries to the British government.