

Diego Garcia the secrets behind the remote US military base
Stars Insider

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Diego Garcia: the secrets behind the remote US military base

The island of Diego Garcia, home to one of the most [mysterious US military bases](#), is plagued by controversy and entangled in many high-profile conspiracy theories. Exiled natives have been protesting for years for the right to return to the island after they were forced to leave and make way for secret military operations. Some theorists even believe that the missing Malaysia Airline Flight 370 was hidden on the island. Intrigued? Click through the gallery to learn more about this mysterious military base.



Diego Garcia

Diego Garcia is a paradisiacal island located in the middle of the Indian Ocean, between Australia and Africa. It's part of the Chagos [Archipelago](#), which is made up of 60 small islands.



History

Historians believe the island was discovered by the Portuguese in the 16th century. It was later colonized by the British and became part of the British Indian Ocean Territory.



Natives

In the 1960s, the British expelled the native people, known as the Chagossians, from Diego Garcia. They destroyed homes and farmland to make way for a military project.

The Chagossians were sent to live on neighboring islands such as the Seychelles and Mauritius.



Repercussions

The expulsion of the island's residents had a huge international impact. They campaigned to be allowed access to their homeland, which resulted in multiple high-profile court cases in the UK.



Military base

The issue of access was tricky because the British had given the island over to the US military, who turned it into a top-secret base. It was turned into a powerful air and

naval hub, which launched several deadly airstrikes during the Persian Gulf War, the Afghanistan War, and the Iraq War.



Base

Given the nature of the operations on the island, civilian access was banned, meaning the natives could never return to their homes.



Book

Anthropologist David Vine wrote a book about the mysterious place called 'Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia.'



Strategic location

In the book, Vine argues that Diego Garcia is a strategic point to control Asia and the Persian Gulf, hence the United States' interest in the island. Needless to say, the native people didn't find this argument very convincing, and successfully sued for access in the 1990s.



A secret prison site?

The expulsion of the Chagossians is not the only controversy to emerge from Diego Garcia. A 2008 exposé in Time magazine claimed that a secret "War on Terror" prison existed on the island from 2002 to 2006.



Damning evidence

The US military claimed never to have used the island for such purposes, but several high-ranking sources claimed that prisoners of war were held and interrogated on the island. It's alleged that the prison may have been used as a black site, i.e. a clandestine prison where detainees are held with no legal recourse and may be interrogated and tortured.



The Diego Garcia conspiracy

In addition to being an alleged CIA black site, Diego Garcia became the subject of a famous conspiracy theory in 2014.



Malaysia Airlines Flight 370

The theory claims that the island may hold the answer to one of the greatest mysteries in civil aviation history: the disappearance of the Malaysian Airlines MH370 flight in 2014.



The flight

Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 took off from Kuala Lumpur Airport and was supposed to land in Beijing. There were 239 people on board, including passengers and crew.



No trace

The crew didn't report anything wrong with the flight before it went off the radars and stopped communicating with ground control. The automatic airplane system also didn't send any fault alerts.



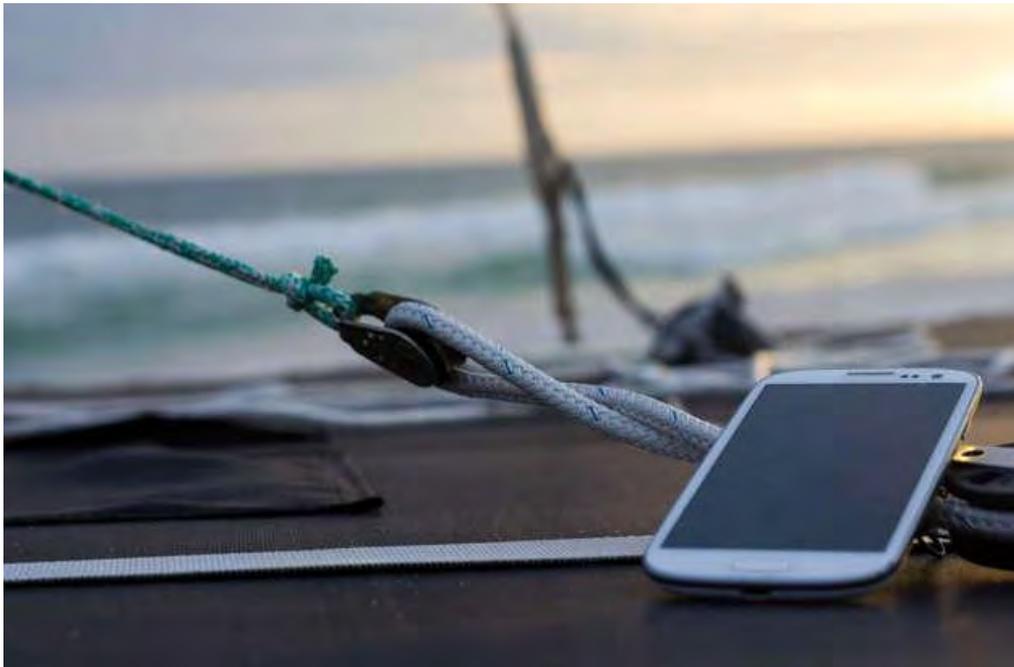
Disappearance

However, a military radar proved that the plane suddenly turned back towards Malaysia and then veered off towards the Indian Ocean, never to be seen again. The total lack of information left a vacuum that was subsequently filled by conspiracy theories.



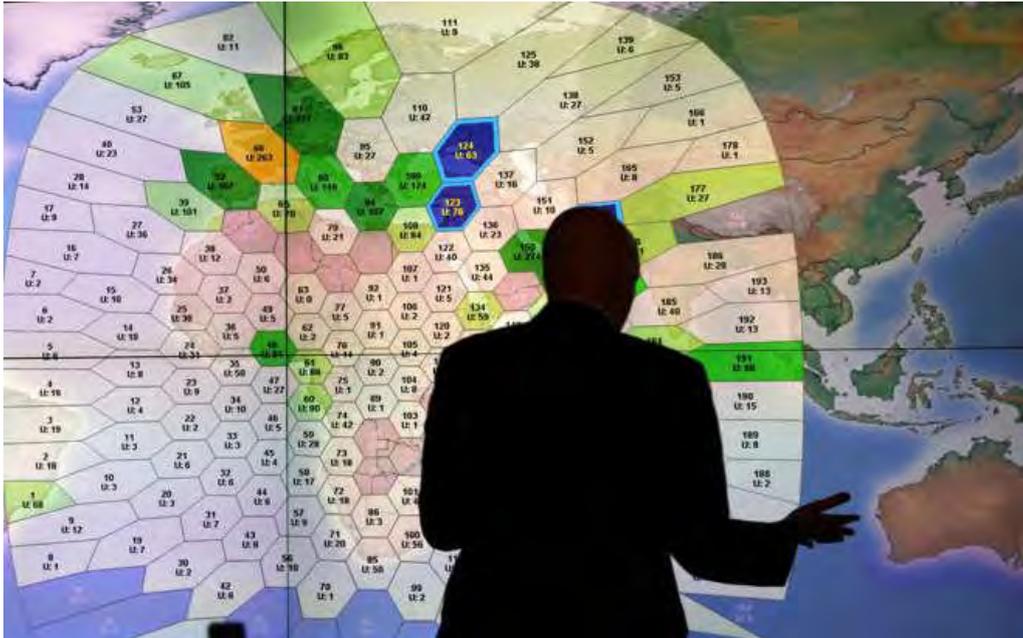
Attempts to contact passengers

According to reports on social media, relatives of the passengers tried to reach their family members by cell phone and said they were able to hear the call signal.



Passengers appeared online

Others say that even three days after the plane disappeared, some of the passengers appeared online on the Chinese QQ messaging app.



Diego Garcia enters the fray

Theories linking the plane's disappearance to Diego Garcia's military base gained strength after these reports.



CIA involvement

Those who believe in the theory argue that the plane was forced to land on the island by the CIA because of a passenger or an object that was on board. They say that after the plane landed, it was dismantled, burned, and part of its fuselage was thrown in the sea.



A cover-up

Another theory suggests that the plane went off course because of an emergency on board and was then shot down by the US military for entering the air space around Diego Garcia without approval. They then covered it up to avoid an international incident.



Official position

These theories became so popular that American authorities had to make an official statement denying that the plane landed on Diego Garcia.



More theories

Another allegation, made by American blogger Jim Stone, further strengthened the theory that the plane was diverted to Diego Garcia.



Philip Wood

Stone claimed that one of the plane's passengers, an engineer named Philip Wood, was able to send a text message and a photo from a cell phone, in which he asked for help.



Prisoners on Diego Garcia

Stone claims that Wood said he had been imprisoned by the US military and sent GPS coordinates that were very close to Diego Garcia.



Plane debris

In the years that followed the disappearance, more than a dozen pieces of debris believed to belong to the plane have washed up on the shores of various countries in the Indian Ocean.



The mystery continues

There are still many theories surrounding the mysterious disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, but sadly the families of the missing passengers and crew members still don't have an answer.



Military base

From an alleged CIA prison to conspiracy theories about the disappearance of the Malaysia Airlines flight, one thing is certain: the island of Diego Garcia remains a mystery.