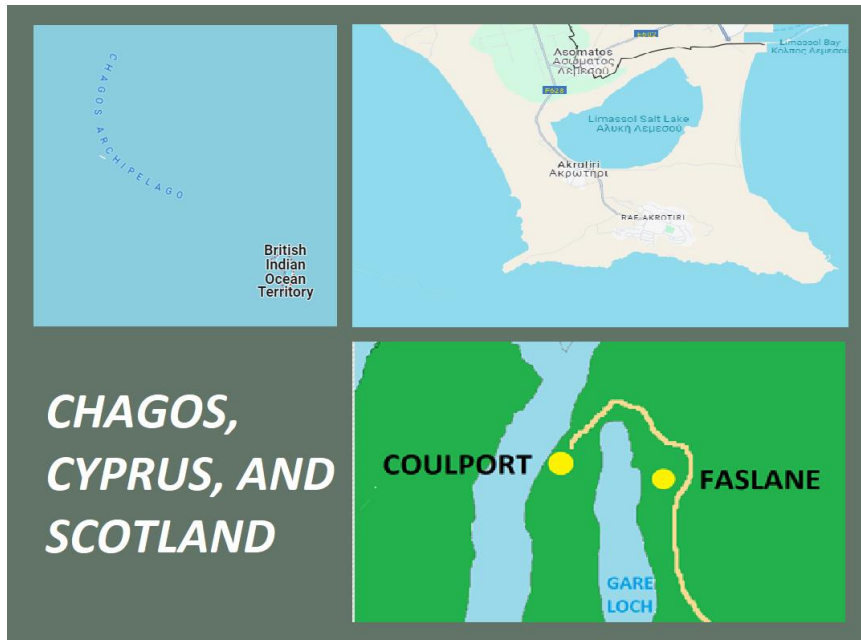


Chagos, Cyprus and Scotland

By David MacKenzie, 2024



News last week that the UK is to hand over sovereignty of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, in belated compliance with the 2019 ruling of the International Court of Justice. True to form, the exiled Chagos islanders were not allowed any part in the negotiations. Also true to form, UK sufferers from Extreme Empire Nostalgia Syndrome are very upset.

It remains to be seen what if any benefit the formal handover will convey to the forced exiles. What is clear is that the US will continue to have its enormous military base on one island in the archipelago – Diego Garcia. This base was more than likely used as a rendition flight stopover and may even have been a “black site”, used for the enhanced interrogation (AKA torture). The bottom line is that in terms of overall control nothing has changed. The US, aided by its client state, the UK, will continue to do as it likes.

The Chagos set-up is very like that in Cyprus, where the UK has two military bases at Akrotiri and Dhekelia, established in perpetuity as part of the deal that gave Cyprus its formal independence. The UK has used

Akrotiri as a base for spy flights in support of Israel's savage cruelty in Gaza. In spite of Cyprus' formal independence the UK does what it, or rather the Pentagon, likes.

And Scotland? Should Scotland become independent and persist with its nuclear-free aspirations Westminster would most likely seek a long or permanent lease (Guantanamo Bay-style) of the Faslane/Coulport complex. This would not only entail the setting up of a de facto British Overseas Territory on the landward end of the system but would also affect Scottish sovereignty over the Clyde estuary approaches. It would also most likely mean the continuation of the dangerous practice of transporting nuclear weapons by road from the bomb factories in Aldermaston/Coulport. Crucially, Scotland would remain the unwilling host to horrifying weapons of mass destruction. Scottish membership of NATO would add to the pressure to maintain the status quo in all but name.

In the run-up to the 2014 independence referendum we knew we would need to tap all our smeddum to withstand that grinding pressure and the inevitable bribery and chicanery that would accompany it. The pressure re Faslane/Coulport will come not just from the obvious and powerful external forces but from a present-day "parcel of rogues" who would lose all principle if offered the false and shabby gold of formal independence in exchange for the status quo of control and hegemony.

However, we were not alone then and we are even less alone now. Article 4:para 4 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) looks like it was written especially for us:

Notwithstanding Article 1 (b) and (g), each State Party that has any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in its territory or in any place under its jurisdiction or control that are owned, possessed or controlled by another State shall ensure the prompt removal of such weapons, as soon as possible but not later than a deadline to be determined by the first meeting of States Parties.