

Why is India building a military base on Agaléga island?



On August 3, Al Jazeera published an extensive investigation into the development of a military facility on North Agaléga island, which is part of the island nation of Mauritius. It revealed that Indian workers are laying the groundwork for what is expected to be an Indian naval military facility.

Although both the Mauritius and Indian governments are denying it, documents and witness accounts Al Jazeera has obtained indicate the construction of various infrastructure proposed for military activities, especially surveillance.

India asserts that these new facilities are part of its Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) policy, which aims to increase maritime cooperation between countries in the region. Mauritius, for its part, has indicated that the coastal personnel will use the new facilities.

But it is clear that the Indian investment in SAGAR in developing an artificial port, and construction hub on this remote island is not aimed at helping Mauritius develop its capacity to police its territorial waters.

North and South Agaléga islands, which are home to approximately 200 ethnically Creole Agalégaes, are located in the strategically important southwest part of the Indian Ocean. The area is currently a blind spot for the Indian Navy and by building a military facility on North Agaléga, India hopes to expand its maritime domain awareness.

The most important new in-

frustration on the atoll is a 3,000-metre runway, and considerable work is also being done on the island. Under construction also are several jetty facilities in deeper water, and what looks like radar and fields which would be used by military personnel.

The airport at Agaléga will be used to support the operation of Indian F-16 fighters. The US-made F-16 is the best of the 27 passenger aircraft, a cutting-edge maritime patrol aircraft, and with anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

While these aircraft have an anti-shipping and submarine strike function, their precision ability is derived from the sophisticated sensors, command and control systems, radar, and intelligence gathering equipment utilised on existing missions.

The vastness of the Indian Ocean means that F-16s and other maritime surveillance aircraft require artificial and refuelling facilities at staging points, which is where facilities like those on North Agaléga island come in.

North and South Agaléga is not the only Indian Ocean island modified for F-16 use. For instance, earlier the citizens on India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the northwest Indian Ocean, at the junction of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, were also enhanced to better support India's patrol aircraft missions.

In a post-war, effective maritime domain awareness helps to

establish international partnerships with like-minded militaries and also acts as a deterrent to both state and non-state adversaries. It is signalling reach and an intention to safeguard interests in a globalised world. By better understanding existing and incoming maritime threats, a government can better plan and respond to emerging threats.

In times of conflict, knowing the location of enemy ships and submarines, without being detected by the process, may be a significant advantage.

While India may publicly justify its effort and expense to build maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean with combating piracy, developing energy and resource capabilities or even providing assistance, China's naval strategy into this region is the true motivation for its expanding naval presence.

The Indian Ocean is now increasingly contested. Despite its Diego Garcia base, the United States no longer enjoys predominance in this strategically important region, in which no one power would have a decisive influence.

In recent years, China has increased its military presence in the Indian Ocean, developed what some analysts call a "string of pearls" - a network of military and commercial facilities along the Indian Ocean littoral, and even established Ocean Littoral, effectively reaching India - and even established its first overseas naval base in Djibouti.

Given China's recent Indian Ocean deployments, its vast military modernisation programme, its

recent conduct on the India-China Himalayas border, and its demonstration of coercive statecraft on the international stage in regard to India is logically eager to inhibit Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

As a result, India - in coordination with the United States, Australia and even France - is undertaking efforts to surveil the Indian Ocean to directly deter and limit China's ability to operate in the region.

The south-western part of the ocean, in particular, is of increasing strategic importance due to increasing maritime shipping routes passing through the Mozambique Channel and around southern Africa.

China also sees the need for its expanding naval presence. The Indian Ocean is now an increasingly contested. Despite its Diego Garcia base, the United States no longer enjoys predominance in this strategically important region, in which no one power would have a decisive influence.

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North Korea says South, US should 'pay' for military drills

South Korea and the United States should pay prices for going ahead with annual joint military drills to begin this week, Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and a senior government official, warned on Tuesday.

The extension was an "act of self-defence for which a due price should be paid as they threaten the safety of our people and further impact the situation on the Korean peninsula," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by North Korea state news agency KCNA.

"They are the most vivid extension of the US hostile policy towards (North Korea), designed to inflict our state by force," she said.

Assessing the South of "provocative behaviour", Kim said that South Korea's defence exercises appear to be more about domestic capabilities, adding that she had been delegated authority to release the statement, implying the message came directly from her brother.

South Korea and the US began preliminary training on Tuesday with larger, complete simulated exercises are scheduled for next week.

The drills, expected to take place from August 16 to 26, have been postponed after a sudden thaw saw Seoul and Pyongyang agree to hold a summit after the Berlin talks.

Hours after Kim's remarks, South Korea did not answer news queries on its stance on the drills. South Korea's unification ministry, which handles relations with

North Korea, said on Tuesday afternoon. The two nations typically check in over the hotline daily to begin the week, Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and a senior government official, warned on Tuesday.

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As new COVID variants emerge, is herd immunity impossible?

Herd immunity is a term that has been bandied around since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. It occurs when a large proportion of a population becomes protected against an illness or infection, significantly reducing the spread of that infection even in the unvaccinated group.

Natural infection, when the population has enough to infect and build up an antibody response, is the characteristic that prevents against infection in the future.

Vaccines, which through protection against disease, allowing them to build up protective antibodies, without the need for infection, are an effective way of preventing against serious infections in the future.

When a disease, such as COVID-19, weakens that way, it can be hard to prevent against infection. We have seen how the virus can spread through countries, leading

to more than 4.3 million deaths worldwide to date. Not only this, it can cause serious illness in the acute phase, and impact lives and livelihoods with the effects of long COVID. We also do not know how effective antibodies acquired through natural infection are, or how long they last, and there are many cases of people catching the coronavirus more than once.

Vaccines, on the other hand, have overcome some of these problems, such as enabling people to get vaccinated before they get sick. Whereas a natural infection will build up antibodies, a vaccine will build up antibodies without the need for infection. This is why a vaccine is a more realistic option.

Health Organization (WHO) supports achieving herd immunity through vaccination, only by allowing a disease to spread through any segment of the population, as this would result in unnecessary cases and deaths.

It is also worth noting that the route taken towards herd immunity through vaccination is important. It is vital that the majority of the population are vaccinated before the disease spreads. In the case of COVID-19, this means that the majority of the population should be vaccinated before the disease spreads. In the case of COVID-19, this means that the majority of the population should be vaccinated before the disease spreads.

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Notice
Great Canal of England related to Fiba Naghshini is not and no longer active.

