# Debate intensifies over Chagos Islands sovereignty deal



The ongoing debate surrounding the status of the Chagos Islands, a British Overseas Territory in the Indian Ocean, has gained significant attention in the UK Parliament, particularly regarding a controversial deal to transfer sovereignty of the islands to Mauritius. Foreign Secretary David Lammy has acknowledged that the proposed deal is susceptible to a veto from United States President Donald Trump, highlighting a complex interplay between international relations and UK domestic politics.

Mr Lammy's comments, made on ITV's Robert Peston show, clarified the situation: "If President Trump doesn’t like the deal, the deal will not go forward." The upcoming discussions are set to take place when Prime Minister Keir Starmer meets with President Trump on Thursday, with anticipation building over how the UK government will navigate the sensitivities surrounding the potential handover, especially given the strategic importance of the Diego Garcia airbase located on the islands.

Reports indicate that President Trump has been presented with a second legal dossier, prepared by Robert Jenrick, the Tory shadow justice secretary. This document outlines arguments against the transfer of sovereignty, suggesting that the handover may not be legally necessary. A source from Trump's team has indicated that there is likely to be reluctance on the part of the President regarding the deal, reflecting broader geopolitical considerations, particularly concerning China's influence in the region.

In a related debate in the Commons, Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, publicly expressed his preference for transferring sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to the US rather than to "corrupt Mauritius." He characterised the push to hand over the territory as driven by "post-colonial guilt" and called for the UK to sell the territory for financial gain instead.

During the discussions, Foreign Office minister Anneliese Dodds emphasised the potential legal ramifications of not finalising the deal. She argued that without a clear agreement, the UK risks facing an "inevitable" legally binding international judgment against its sovereignty.

Dame Priti Patel, the shadow foreign secretary, voiced concerns about the implications of the lease agreement for the Diego Garcia military base. She warned that without the ability to unilaterally extend the lease after 99 years, the UK could lose control over the base and its associated military assets, creating uncertainty for national security.

As the negotiations evolve, tensions have emerged within the political landscape, with Labour leaders seeking to convince President Trump of the merits of the deal while critics argue that it undermines British sovereignty. The House of Commons recently voted against a motion by the Conservatives that sought to increase transparency regarding the negotiations, which further illustrates the contentious nature of this issue.

The Chagos Islands case continues to unfold as both Parliament and the international community watch closely, navigating the intricate dynamics of sovereignty, geopolitical strategy, and historical legacy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://classe-internationale.com/2024/12/15/the-sovereignty-transfer-of-the-chagos-islands/> - This article discusses the agreement between the UK and Mauritius to transfer sovereignty over the Chagos Islands, highlighting the complexities surrounding the deal, including the continued operation of the US-UK military base on Diego Garcia for 99 years.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chagos_Archipelago_sovereignty_dispute> - This Wikipedia page provides detailed information on the sovereignty dispute over the Chagos Archipelago, including historical background, legal challenges, and recent developments in negotiations between the UK and Mauritius.
* <https://warontherocks.com/2024/10/mauritius-one-step-closer-to-diego-garcia-sovereignty/> - This article explores the implications of the UK-Mauritius agreement on sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, emphasizing the strategic importance of the Diego Garcia military base and its impact on international relations.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64644453> - This BBC news article could provide context on the geopolitical tensions and historical background surrounding the Chagos Islands, although it is not directly mentioned in the search results.
* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/10/uk-mauritius-reach-deal-on-chagos-islands-sovereignty> - This Al Jazeera article might discuss the UK-Mauritius agreement on the Chagos Islands, focusing on the implications for sovereignty and international relations, though it is not directly available in the search results.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/03/uk-mauritius-agree-chagos-islands-sovereignty-deal> - This Guardian article could cover the UK-Mauritius agreement on the Chagos Islands, detailing the political and legal aspects of the deal, although it is not explicitly mentioned in the search results.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/lammy-trump-starmer-chagos-islands-b2705329.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data