

# Royal Marines aid Montserrat evacuation

Scientists monitoring the Chances Peak volcano report that the latest gas samples indicate a volcanic explosion is increasingly likely on the tiny British dependency of Montserrat. The lack of certain gases could mean they are trapped inside the volcano, building pressures that could lead to an eruption



**POPULATION:**  
About 12,000, most  
of African descent,  
but also reflecting

a recent influx of white American,  
British and Canadian retirees

**GEOGRAPHY:** The island, 18km long  
and 11km wide, lies 2,000 kilometres  
southeast of Miami. It was formed  
through volcanic activity and is  
mountainous and tropical. Its highest  
point is the Chances Peak volcano,

elevation 914 metres

**HISTORY:** The island was inhabited by  
Carib Indians when first sighted by  
Columbus in 1493, and was settled by  
Irish Catholics from neighbouring St  
Kitts in the 1600s. The first African  
slaves arrived in 1651

**GOVERNMENT:** Queen Elizabeth is  
head of state and is represented by a  
governor

**ECONOMY:** Mainstay is agriculture, but  
tourism is a major foreign exchange  
earner. The economy is still recovering