

Google errs -- twice -- over status of disputed isle

November 11 2010, By DANIEL WOOLLS , Associated Press

(AP) -- Google Inc. said Thursday its mapping service goofed twice by attributing a disputed islet off North Africa first to Morocco, and then to Spain, when the company's goal is to be neutral.

The two countries, close neighbors and allies who are prone to outbreaks of disagreement, inched toward military confrontation in the summer of 2002 over the rocky outcropping. The islet was inhabited only by goats when Moroccan troops occupied it, but Spain promptly sent warships to eject the soldiers.

Both countries claim the islet, which Spain calls Perejil, or parsley, and the Moroccans call Leila, meaning night. But, under a U.S.-brokered deal that ended the crisis the islet's status was declared under review.

[Google](#) Spain spokeswoman Marisa Toro said the search engine learned in July that its [mapping service](#) erroneously assigned the islet to Morocco. It is only about 250 meters (yards) off the coast of the North African kingdom, which is separated from Spain by the slim Strait of Gibraltar.

Google's geopolitical team at its headquarters in Mountain View, California, consulted with international bodies including the United Nations, and recently decided to declare the islet a disputed territory that belongs to neither Spain nor Morocco, she said. Engineers have been working to make the correction, she said.

But since Monday, [Google Maps](#) has been attributing the islet to Spain, or to neither country, depending on the wording that is typed into the search engine.

Toro said she could not pinpoint the cause.

"It is our mistake and we are working to resolve it," she said.

Google has been dragged into a territorial conflict on the other side of the Atlantic, too.

Nicaragua is carrying out river dredging in a disputed border area with Costa Rica, and the Nicaraguan official in charge of the project says he used Google's map system to decide where the work should be done.

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