

NAVAL MESSAGE

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NAVY DEPARTMENT

ROUTINE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2

RECENT DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN INDIAN OCEAN AREA (U)

1. THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT AND ANALYSIS IS SUBMITTED TO REEMPHASIZE THE MILITARY IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA AND THE FRAILTY OF OUR OPERATIONS THERE. IT IS MEASURED BY RECENT OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE WHICH HIGHLIGHTS THE FACT THAT THE INDIAN OCEAN IS IMPORTANT TO US NOW; IT IS NOT JUST AN INDETERMINATE FACTOR IN EXECUTION OF FUTURE PLANS.

2. NAVY AND JCS PLANNING DOCUMENTS REFLECT FULL APPRECIATION OF THE POWER VACUUM EXISTING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA. THE PREDATORY THREAT OF RED CHINA TO SOUTH ASIA APPEARS WELL APPRECIATED. THE US IS ENGAGED IN A COMPREHENSIVE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE EFFORT TO BUTTRESS SOUTH ASIA AGAINST CHINESE EFFORTS TO FOLLOW THIS PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE. RECENT AGREEMENTS BETWEEN SEYCHELLES, MAURITIUS, AND THE U.K. TO DETACH STRATEGIC ISLANDS WHICH ARE NOW FORMED INTO THE "BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY"; AND IMPENDING AGREEMENT BETWEEN U.K. AND US FOR USE OF DIEGO GARCIA ARE ENCOURAGING STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, CHRONIC INDIAN-PAKISTANI ENMITY, COMPOUNDED BY THE STUBBORN NEUTRALISM OF THE FORMER AND THE GROWING ANTI-US BIAS OF THE LATTER, RETARDS OUR SOUTH ASIAN POLICY. ON THE WHOLE, PROSPECTS FOR EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF US POWER IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA, WHEN AND IF REQUIRED, ARE DUBIOUS. ALSO QUESTIONABLE IS THE SUCCESS OF CONTINGENCY PLANS REQUIRING EXPEDITIOUS MOVEMENT OF FORCES EITHER EAST OR WEST THROUGH THIS AREA.

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3. WHILE THE BROAD U.S. EFFORT IS MAKING HEADWAY, THE NAVY IS BEGINNING TO FEEL THE EFFECTS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN VOID IN A DIFFERENT BUT MORE IMMEDIATE SENSE, I.E., REGARDING OUR ABILITY TO SUPPORT, AND REPLACE FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM, FROM THE EUROPEAN THEATRE. THE EASTWARD LINE OF COMMUNICATION TO VIETNAM IS SHORTER BY OVER 5,000 NAUTICAL MILES THAN THE WESTWARD ALTERNATIVE. THUS, THE EASTWARD ROUTE REDUCES REACTION TIME, SAVES MONEY, AND - ALL OTHER FACTORS BEING EQUAL - IS THE PREFERABLE ROUTE TO THE FAR EAST FROM EUROPE, OR FROM THE EAST COAST OF THE U.S. FOR SHIPS UNABLE TO TRANSIT THE PANAMA CANAL. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE DEARTH OF OVER-FLIGHT AND LANDING RIGHTS, FUELING FACILITIES, AND POLITICAL SYMPATHY, USE OF THE EASTWARD ROUTE IS ALARMINGLY UNCERTAIN. ITS DIFFICULTIES AND UNRELIABILITY CAN BE ILLUSTRATED BY TWO RECENT CASES, ONE BY SEA, THE OTHER BY AIR.

4. USS BOXER (LPH-4) SAILED FOR VIETNAM FROM THE EAST COAST IN AUGUST 1965 WITH HELICOPTERS OF THE FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIR MOBILE). HER PASSAGE WAS AFFECTED TWICE BY MINOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS. FIRST: BEFORE TRANSIT OF THE SUEZ CANAL, ALUSNA CAIRO INSISTED UPON NIGHT PASSAGE IN ORDER NOT TO ATTRACT CRITICAL ATTENTION. SECOND: A FUELING STOP IN ADEN WAS DENIED BECAUSE OF POLITICAL TURMOIL AND LABOR STRIKES. WITHDRAWAL OF ADEN AS A LOGISTIC STOP REQUIRED OTHER ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUELING BETWEEN SIXTH FLEET UNREP AND DESTINATION. DJIBOUTI WAS CONSIDERED, BUT REJECTED BY CONCERN OVER THE SAFETY OF NAVIGATION IN A CONFINED HARBOR. ARRANGEMENTS WERE EVENTUALLY MADE TO RENDEZVOUS AND FUEL UNDERWAY FROM A USNS TANKER EN ROUTE THE FAR EAST FROM BAHRAIN, AN EVENT THAT WAS SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED IN GOOD WEATHER IN THE EASTERN ARABIAN SEA.

5. EXECUTION OF 14 NOV JCS ORDER TO TRANSFER TWO EA3B AIRCRAFT FROM ROTA TO ATSUGI PRESENTED A MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SIMPLER AND, IN THE END, PERHAPS QUICKER TO HAVE STAGED THIS MOVEMENT THROUGH CONUS, IT WAS CONSIDERED A USEFUL EXERCISE TO DETERMINE WHETHER RELATIVELY SHORT LEGGED NAVAL COMBAT AIRCRAFT COULD ACTUALLY BE FLOWN EASTWARD TO WESTPAC AND, IF SO, HOW MUCH EFFORT WOULD BE INVOLVED. 25 DAYS, NUMEROUS TELEPHONE CALLS, AND 55 MESSAGES LATER (RELATED TO CLEARANCES) IT WAS FOUND THAT THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION ABOVE WAS "YES", THE SECOND "CONSIDERABLE". THE FINAL ROUTE FOR THE A-3'S AND SUPPORTING C-130 (BOTH WASY FOR THE LATTER) WAS ROTA, SPAIN - INCIRLIK, TURKEY (RON) - MUHARRAQ, BAHRAIN - MADRAS, INDIA - BUTTERWORTH RAAF BASE, MALAYSIA (RON) - CUBI PT - ATSUGI. COLLATERAL ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR USE OF SHARUAH RAF BASE, TRUCIAL COAST AND TENGAH RAF BASE, SINGAPORE AS ALTERNATIVES FOR MUHARRAQ AND BUTTDRWORTH, RESPECTIVELY. MOST SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED:

A. THOUGH NOT SANGUINE ABOUT ACHIEVING SUCCESS, AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO ACQUIRE GAN RAF BASE, MALDIVES AS THE NECESSARY MID-POINT FUEL STOP. THE REQUEST WAS REJECTED BY MOD UK (AIR) WHICH REGRETFULLY

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SUGGESTED ITS WITHDRAWAL ON THE BASIS OF UK-MALDIVIAN AGREEMENTS WHICH EXCLUDE MILITARY AIRCRAFT OF THIRD COUNTRIES.

B. MADRAS, INDIA AIRPORT WAS NEXT ASSAYED. CLEARANCE REQUEST TO ALUSNA NEW DELHI NECESSARILY INCLUDED RELAXATION OF CERTAIN UCACCEPTABLE FLIGHT REGULATIONS (E.G., CUSTOMS CLEARANCE AT BOMBAY) AND AN ASSURANCE THAT AIRCRAFT WERE UNARMED. GOI CLEARANCE FOR MADRAS BECAME THE CRITICAL DETERMINANT OF THE EASTWARD FLIGHT PLAN. CLEARANCE WAS RECEIVED ON 29 NOVEMBER, AND THE FLIGHT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT HITCH. A MISUNDERSTANDING CONCERNING FUEL AVAILABLE AT MADRAS FOR THE C-130 RETURN CAUSED A 24-HOUR DELAY IN THAT FLIGHT, BUT WAS NOT ATTRIBUTABLE TO CLEARANCE PROBLEM.

C. SHAHJAH RAF BASE WAS NOT USED, THOUGH EVENTUALLY CLEARED AFTER A LENGTHY SERIES OF MESSAGE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS. IT WAS DEDUCED THAT THE BASE COMMANDER HAD LITTLE INTEREST IN ACCOMMODATING THE FLIGHT. HOWEVER, AN EN ROUTE STOP WAS ARRANGED FOR THE FLIGHT PROVIDING THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE SQUADRON BROUGHT THEIR OWN SLEEPING TENTS.

D. TENGAH AND BUTTERWORTH BASES POSED NO PROBLEM, THOUGH FOR THE LATTER IT WAS NECESSARY TO GET BOTH MALAYSIAN AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PERMISSION, WHICH WAS TIME CONSUMING.

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6. THE CONCLUSION DRAWN FROM THESE TWO CASES IS THAT THE PRACTICABILITY OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA PASSAGE HANGS BY A TENUOUS THREAD. THE CHAIN OF BASES WHICH EXTENDED SOLIDLY FROM GIBRALTAR TO HONG KONG DURING THE CENTURY OF PAX BRITANNICA HAS LOST MANY OF ITS FUNDAMENTAL LINKS. SEA LEVEL TRANSIT VIA THE SUEZ CANAL NOW HINGES ON THE SUFFERANCE OF NASSER. DEPLOYMENTS ARE A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM. THIS IS BECAUSE OF THE TIME CONSUMING (MEASURED IN WEEKS) QUANTITY OF OVERFLIGHT, LANDING, AND LOGISTICAL AUTHORIZATIONS WHICH MUST BE OBTAINED FROM SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS, MANY OF WHOM WOULD PROBABLY BE QUICK TO REVOKE THEIR PRESENT INDULGENCE IF IRRITATED BY ANY REAL OR FANCIED GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE US.

7. TIME AND SPACE FACTORS AND GEOGRAPHY POINT TO INDIA AS THE KEY MID POINT ON THE ROUTE. IN THE EA-38 CASE, IF NEW DELHI HAD NOT COOPERATED, CEYLON WOULD HAVE BEEN THE LAST OPTION - WITH PROBABLY LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS. SOLID OPEN END ARRANGEMENTS WITH INDIA TO PERMIT STAGING OF US WARSHIPS, MILITARY AIRCRAFT, TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT APPEAR NECESSARY IF THE US IS TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN PROMPT DEPLOYMENT OF SUPPORTING FORCES TO SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM THE EUROPEAN SIDE.

8. TO STRENGTHEN US MILITARY POSTURE IN SOUTH ASIA, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT MILITARY, ECONOMIC, AND P.L. 480 AID AND EXECUTIVE PROMISES OF SUPPORT AGAINST THE CHINESE NUCLEAR THREAT BE USED AS LEVERAGE TO OBTAIN CONTINUING US OVERFLIGHT, LANDING, AND LOGISTIC BASE RIGHTS. IT IS CONSIDERED IN THE IMMEDIATE US INTEREST TO PRESS AN AGREEMENT WITH INDIA FOR LOGISTIC AND TRANSIT PRIVILEGES FOR US MILITARY ELEMENTS (IDEALLY COCHIN AND MADRAS, WHICH ARE REMOTE FROM KASHMIR); CONCURRENTLY, TO HASTEN PLANNED DEVELOPMENT OF DIEGO GARCIA.

9. IMPLICIT THROUGHOUT THIS DISCUSSION IS AWARENESS THAT THE DIMENSIONS OF THIS PROBLEM WILL DIMINISH PROPORTIONATELY TO THE EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR POWER PROPULSION TO THE SURFACE SHIPS OF THE NAVY. THIS IS ONE SIGNIFICANT REMEDY WHICH THE US CAN APPLY WITHOUT RECOURSE TO ANY OTHER NATION AND POINTS UP ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT REASONS FOR ANIMATING THE SURFACE SHIP NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM, GP-4

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