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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

IN REPLY REFER TO

OP-003
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Op-93/jw
Ser: 00290P93
2 Jan 1962

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

Via: Vice Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: Strategic Island Concept (U) *R*

1. This memorandum is to fill you in on some actions which have been taken to advance the subject concept (originated by Op-93 in early 1960), and to suggest a possible need for early steps in furtherance thereof.
2. CNO submitted JCS 2121/77 (on which Op-60 can brief you more fully) in November 1960. Specific site proposals therein were limited to the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic, the most urgent areas and the only ones for which studies had then been made. A survey of the Pacific was immediately thereafter begun by Op-93 and a preliminary study thereon was distributed to all concerned in February and March. Subsequently we have looked at the Caribbean area also. The tactical situation involving JCS 2121/77 has prevented any extension by Op-06 of the original proposal to JCS.
3. In April 1961 Sec. Nitze was briefed on the concept, with emphasis on the Indian Ocean application, he was interested, and he initiated informal discussion with State. However, the Berlin crisis appears to have pushed this into the background.
4. In the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic we had originally been thinking in terms only of U.S. purchase or lease of a very few islands for support of contingency operations, and suitable sites for such purposes were scarce. When we contemplated the plethora of Pacific islands, in the context that perhaps we were facing a last chance to keep tropical-latitude sites freely available for all types of unforeseeable uses for all time to come, our approach changed. We deliberately selected sites laid out to cover the entire ocean, as a unit of space, without sole regard to conventional military concepts or requirements,

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but with attention, for example, to potential needs for broad ocean surveillance and space support. We considered scientific needs as well as those of all services. Our military criteria were location, airfield potential, anchorage potential; our political criteria were minimal population, isolation, present status, historical and ethnic factors. Our tentative selections were based on a blend of military and political factors: if their military potential was great, we included politically more difficult islands, if it was not great we excluded them. Then we went back and reworked the other oceans by similar criteria.

5. The product, of course, was a list of islands much too numerous for U.S. purchase or lease. We therefore proposed to Op-06 that the basic concept of U.S. purchase or lease be broadened to one of encouraging the present controlling powers (U.S., UK, Australia, New Zealand, France) to single out these islands for permanent retention under their full sovereignty, with U.S. purchase from other nations limited to those more important sites for which retention, and U.S. use when needed, could not otherwise be assured. We pointed out also that for many islands, in view of the progressive commitments to independence, delay in taking such action would mean loss to unrestricted control by the metropole.

6. Mindful of this urgency, and in the light of the doubtful outcome in JCS, discussion was initiated last month with RADM Lee in OSD/ISA as to the possibility of renewed initiative from that source toward political action (not keyed to U.S. military requirements) toward the broadened concept, i.e., retention of sovereignty by present controlling powers. On his affirmative response, and at his suggestion, Op-93 has reviewed the previous studies and furnished him a consolidated world-wide survey of islands deserving consideration under the broad criteria stated in para. 4. We also included islands meeting the same criteria in US-controlled groups, including the Trust Territory, Ryukyus and Bonins. We emphasized that the earmarking of a few lightly populated islands for permanent U.S. or friendly sovereignty does not mean that we do not need to keep or obtain rights elsewhere as long as we possibly can.

7. It is difficult to brief here the many geographic, military and political facets of this world-wide survey, or to cover briefly the answers to such questions as why we should not

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attempt more, less, or nothing at all. I am prepared to brief you orally, with map and charts, or will provide you a copy of the rather bulky survey draft if you wish.

8. RADM Lee has apparently not yet determined what action would be desirable, and is probably awaiting JCS action on 2121/77/4. He, of course, will not take any action not in accord with CNO's views, both as to objectives and to procedures, and I believe we should take informal steps to acquaint him with these views promptly, so that he will be able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Y.A.

T.H. Moore

T. H. MOORER
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Director,
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