

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20330

*Strategic
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MEMORANDUM OF INFORMATION FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Subj: Indian Ocean Islands (U)

1. In the months since completion of last Summer's site surveys and subsequent confirmation of U.S. interest in reserving certain strategic Indian Ocean islands (Chagos Archipelago, Coetivy, Aldabra) for possible future US/UK contingency use, several factors have delayed institution by the U.K. of procedures to detach the islands and place them under its direct control and administration.

2. a. Chief among these factors were last Fall's U.K. election and change of government, which necessarily resulted in a review of the proposals. Since the election, however, the new Prime Minister and two successive Foreign Secretaries have indicated support for the Indian Ocean strategic island concept.

b. Another important factor was U.K. insistence on details of specific U.S. requirements and construction and funding plans for each of the islands concerned. The U.K. Foreign Office was recently informed and accepts the fact that a specific U.S. requirement exists only for Project KATHY and supporting facilities, on Diego Garcia, which we hope could be operational in late calendar 1968.

3. In mid-February, the Foreign Office informed the U.S. Embassy at London that the U.K. cabinet would consider and approve institution about 1 March of detachment proceedings for the entire Chagos Archipelago, Aldabra Island and possibly other islands. However, more recent information from the Embassy indicates schedule slippage of several weeks, with the question still "churning around" among various Ministries.

COMMENT. Additional unfortunate delays notwithstanding, prognosis is still optimistic for achievement of the goal of detachment of the most desirable strategic Indian Ocean islands for future possible use.

Harold A. Schuch

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