



OP-00 FILES: 11000
09 H/e

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350

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IN REPLY REFER TO

Op-61/rd
Ser 002125P61
11 Nov 1969

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subj: Diego Garcia (U)

Encl: (1) Talking paper entitled "Diego Garcia"
(2) Talking paper entitled "Strategic Implications"

1. In compliance with the orders of CNO, at 1000 this date I met with Senator Henry Jackson in his office, and briefed him on Diego Garcia. I supplied him with enclosures (1) and (2). He read them thoroughly, asked questions as he went along, and returned them to me when I departed at about 1025.

2. The substance of Senator Jackson's questioning is as follows:

a. He questioned the size of the MILCON appropriation. I referred to NAVFAC forms DD 1391 that I had in my possession and gave him figures of \$9.5 million for FY 1970 and \$13.7 million for FY 1971.

b. He showed interest in the geography of Diego Garcia. I showed him an aerial photograph plus a small chart which indicated the locations of the proposed facilities. In addition I showed him a chart of the entire Chagos Archipelago.

c. He asked about the climate. I told him that it was tropical, since Diego Garcia is at 7.5°S latitude, and that it was relatively free from storms.

d. He asked about the local population. I told him that it consisted entirely of rotating contract copra workers, and that the British intended to relocate them as soon as possible after Congressional action was complete. He came back to this question twice more. He was obviously concerned about local political problems. I assured him that there should be none.

e. He asked about the attitude of the Indians. I told him that they knew of our plans to build an austere facility, and although they were opposed to it, for the record, they had made no public fuss about it.

DOWNGRADING AT 12-YEAR INTERVALS

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OP-00 CONTROL NO.

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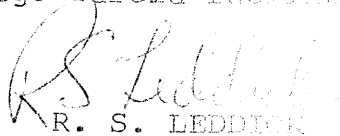
f. We discussed the great size of the Indian Ocean, and the need for a refueling facility in the Indian Ocean, to permit more flexible operations. I pointed out the difficulties inherent in Indian Ocean operations, particularly if no fuel stops are permitted in South Africa.

g. He was interested in our relationship with the British concerning the BIOT. I described our relationship, pointing out that Diego Garcia would fly the U.K. flag, be available to the British, but that it would be manned and operated by the U.S. He was interested in the funding arrangements in which U.S. obtained base rights in the BIOT. I told him that the cost to the U.S. was \$14 million for detachment costs, which were funded by offsetting Polaris R&D charges.

h. We discussed briefly the possibility of using the Indian Ocean for Polaris operations. He recognized the strategic potential but was aware that we have not conducted Polaris ops in the Indian Ocean to date.

i. We discussed the increasing Russian presence in the area. He stated that the USSR was probably more interested in opening up the Suez Canal than we are. I told him that it was possible that the USSR is interested in using Socotra for a facility, similar to ours in Diego Garcia.

j. As I departed, Senator Jackson indicated that he had been in favor of this project, but that he had been outvoted by his fellow subcommittee members. He did not tell me what action he would take next. I left him with the thought that the U.S. will be getting a great deal for its money with the Diego Garcia facility.


R. S. LEDDICK

Copy to:

Op-00

Op-09

Op-06

Op-04

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Subj: Diego Garcia

1. A bilateral agreement was signed in December 1966 between HMG and the USG which granted the US 30 years base rights on the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The BIOT was formed in 1965 and comprises the Clagos Archipelago (includes Diego Garcia), Aldabra, Isle de Roches, and Farquhar. The selection of these islands was predicated on unquestioned UK sovereignty and a negligible population. The islands were formerly part of the Mauritius and Seychelles Group. **
2. An austere logistic support activity has become necessary to insure Navy readiness in the South Atlantic, Indian and Western Pacific Oceans. Access to ports for bunkering and resupply has diminished dangerously in this area due to various political factors. Communications in the Indian Ocean are tenuous without satisfactory coverage of the Mid-Indian Ocean area. Lack of fueling facilities and immediately responsive communications, while not prohibiting naval operations limits operational flexibility. No military facilities of any nature exist in this area and a new facility is required for ship refueling, limited aviation, and communications.
3. Diego Garcia is the most centrally located island in the Indian Ocean and is physically satisfactory to meet the mission requirements. Its present population consists of approximately 400 rotating contract personnel engaged in harvesting copra. The proposed naval facility will occupy approximately one-half of the island's total land area of 6400 acres.
4. The USN proposed the establishment of an austere (\$26 million MILCON plus an additional \$8 million for the procurement of communication and supply equipment) naval facility on Diego Garcia consisting of the following components:
 - a. Anchorage suitable for a CVA task group plus 5-8 auxiliaries.
 - b. Airstrip (8000 ft.) for logistical support.
 - c. POL storage (415,000 bls).
 - d. Personnel support facilities for about 200 men.

ENCLOSURE (1) to CNO Sir/Memo. CC 2125761
d3 1701.1.1.1968

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5. A SECDEF decision dated 15 June 1968 approved the Diego Garcia project concept in principle. Navy included in FY 70 budget.

6. On 3 September 1968, HMG approved our proposal for an austere facility on Diego Garcia. British participation in the project will be limited to flying their flag over the facility and the provision of one or more liaison officers. British military ships and aircraft will have full rights of access.

7. The target date for commencing construction is 1 April 1970, with personnel and equipment scheduled to arrive Diego Garcia that date. Seabees would be used for all construction except for dredging which will be by contractor. The use of local labor is not contemplated. Construction will take about 30 months.

8. Over the years the UK presence in the Indian Ocean has tended to stabilize the region. The UK withdrawal from east of Suez is causing a power vacuum which has created situations inimical to our national interests. The USSR has coveted the natural resources of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean littoral. Through military assistance, various forms of political, cultural and economic contact, visits of high officials and military units, and providing military hardware, the USSR has undertaken an active and direct presence in the Indian Ocean. Predominance of the USSR over the natural resources of the Indian Ocean area could have serious impact on the strategic positions of the US and its allies.

9. Guaranteed access to the Indian Ocean is essential to carry on normal commerce, execute contingency operations, meet threat commitments, and carry out national strategy.

10. The Diego Garcia installation could provide a potential back-up site in the event that MIDEASTFOR cannot be based at Bahrein after the UK withdraws. In addition some of the activities at Kagnaw Station, Ethiopia could be transferred to Diego Garcia should the political situation call for a reduction in our military presence.

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11. Should further study reveal that Polaris operations in the Indian Ocean are feasible and desirable, Diego Garcia could serve as a useful site for replenishment and support. No additional construction or maintenance costs would be necessary. We could quickly move to Indian Ocean basing for Polaris should the Soviet ABM or ASW threat change suddenly.

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STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The US requires an operating and logistic support facility, strategically located in the Indian Ocean to ~~provide the President~~ (and Commander) with an option to support National interests in the Indian Ocean and littoral.

Encl
(1)

The strategic importance of the Indian Ocean and its littoral stems from its geographic location, vast natural and human resources, important ports, commodities and potential as a staging area in support of contingency operations, and the expanding pressures, through presence and influence, on underdeveloped countries in the area.

Encl
(2)

US presence and capability to exert appropriate influence in the area is necessary in order to preserve stable governments friendly to the US, and to act as a barrier to communistic expansion.

Soviets have long sought warm water ports in ready access to the sea lines of communication. Reopening Suez Canal in company with Soviet controlled port on the Indian Ocean could be prejudicial to Middle East oil supplies which could in turn be inimical to the best interests of the US.

US interests in Indian Ocean include:

Stability and preservation of friendly governments.

Denial of area and resources to hostile powers.

Free access to and transit of Indian Ocean.

Continued access to ME oil.

Protection of private investment and citizens.

Humanitarian, and

If necessary, in the prosecution of US foreign policy - staging and supporting contingency operations.

Increasing Soviet presence, CHICOM influence, growing nationalism, and strategic vacuum evolving from British withdrawal indicate that US must be prepared to become involved in the affairs of this area or be excluded through default.

ENCLOSURE (2) to CHQ, Ser/Memo (S-135) (C)
dtd 11/11/58

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Lack of assured support facility any place in Indian Ocean today or foreseeable future and political expense of entering into agreements with the Indian Ocean littoral nations render the most austere logistic support preclude exercising any option in the selection of US involvement should such be necessary.

Austere facility at Diego, now, will establish a logistic support facility capable of providing the US with the US/UK controlled, totally available facility (No holds barred), ready for use in support of our national policies. This freedom of operation and ability to support forces provides the President with the range of involvement options from no involvement to what ever level deemed necessary.

In summary, Diego Garcia was selected as the site for an austere facility for the following reasons:

It is the most centrally located island in the Indian Ocean with satisfactory physical characteristics.

~~For all practical purposes it is uninhabited~~, consequently there is little likelihood of commercial or political complications at a local level.

It fills a vital military need in light of the UK withdrawal from the Indian Ocean, in combination with a Russian expansion into the area.

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