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MAR 28 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (Attn: Dep Asst E. K. Sloan)**Subj: Indian Ocean Islands (U)****Ref: (a) Memorandum by the DEPASSTSEC STATE for Politico-Military Affairs, subject as above, dated 2 March 1964**

Recent events involving certain nations on the periphery of the Indian Ocean have served to underscore, again, a long-recognized deficiency in our military planning; namely the difficulties inherent in projecting a continuing U.S. military presence into this region without access to any in-area support sites. Among these events I would mention the evidences of lack of stability in several East African governments, the breakdown of the tenuous cease-fire between Malaysian and Indonesian border groups, and the manifestations of continuing hostility between India and her neighbors, Pakistan and China. The stability of this entire area has historically been rooted in a Western presence, primarily that of the U.K. There is growing evidence, however, that a continuing reassessment by the U.K. of her commitments world-wide will lead to a lower priority for Indian Ocean and East African involvement. U.S. policy objectives relating to stabilization of new governments and containment of communist encroachment may thus be prejudiced, unless we are prepared to provide an early and decisive military presence if circumstances require.

A first step in the amelioration of this potentially dangerous situation was taken in London recently, as a result of a meeting between State Department, Department of Defense personnel and representatives of the government of the United Kingdom. One U.S. objective of this conference was to obtain British permission to conduct an early survey of the Chagos Archipelago (with special attention to the island of Diego Garcia) to determine if this site is suitable for the programmed DCA "Asian Gateway" Communications Station (Project KATHY). Beyond this, however, our aim was to convince the British that in the light of emerging self-determination among the larger island groups of the Indian Ocean, it would be prudent to take steps now to identify and retain under

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U.K. continuing control, remote, economically unimportant islands that appear to have military support possibilities in the event that they are needed in the future. We emphasized the point that we have no plans to engage in any military support facility construction in a specific time frame. Further, we clearly stated that we have no desire or intention to supplant the U.K. as the primary Western force in this area.

The British reaction was sympathetic and cooperative. They have agreed to separate the Chagos Archipelago from the administrative control of Mauritius as soon as possible and to make arrangements for a joint site survey following this action. In the meantime, the U.S. team is requested to obtain U.S. governmental approval of the accords reached at the conference and to consider possible future support requirements involving U.K.-controlled islands in the Western sector of the Indian Ocean. This should be done with a view toward a second joint survey and consequent separation of selected islands from parent administrative groupings.

In view of the fact that there will be no commitment on the part of the United States to expend funds (apart from the DCA communications station) unless military support facilities are required, I feel that the impetus given to the development of this concept by the US/UK Conference should be continued by implementation planning now. Such planning need only relate to possible future U.S. utilization, so that a survey can realistically identify those sites that should be reserved.

Finally, I would like to comment briefly upon the timing of the conference in relation to the forthcoming deployment of the carrier task group to the Indian Ocean. The coincidence of action in these two separate efforts has, I believe, resulted in some confusion. The deployment of the "Concord Squadron" is independent of our efforts to stockpile access rights to military support sites, and under the present frame of reference (deploy to the Indian Ocean 2 months out of 6) will not rely upon in-area support.

PAUL H. NITZE
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

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