

Op-601F2/me

18 FEB 1964

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subj: USN Position Paper of Indian Ocean Islands  
Discussions with UK (S)

1. The attached position paper represents the views of the Chief of Naval Operations regarding discussions with United Kingdom officials on possible military use of certain islands in the Indian Ocean. The paper shall be distributed to selected personnel who will assist in the preparation of the U.S. position and/or will participate in the discussions.

DAVID L. McDONALD

ORIG: LCDR G F ROGERS USN, Op-601F2, X-55825 on 2/7/64  
TYPD: MOORE, YNC, USN

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2. USN Position

a. Immediate Requirements. The United States Navy has only one immediate requirement for real estate in the Indian Ocean area - to provide a site for the Defense Communication Agency "Asian Gateway" communication station, with a co-located U.S. Navy communication station (Project KATHY). Attention has focused upon

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USN POSITION PAPER

INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS DISCUSSIONS WITH U.K.

1. General Considerations

Bilateral discussions with the UK concerning Indian Ocean Islands will commence in February. This represents the first effective step forward in Navy efforts to stockpile base rights in strategic locations to ensure eventual accessibility to areas in which potential commitments can be foreseen.

The Indian Ocean area, with its increasing antagonisms among surrounding nations, CHICOM expansionist operations and a gradually diminishing British presence, has been a source of concern to US military and political experts for some time. At present, the US has no bases for direct military support or agreements to use existing foreign-owned bases in the vast area between Suez and Singapore. The most suitable method of projecting a significant US military presence into the area in current circumstances is through sea-based forces. An intermittent deployment of naval forces is planned to commence in the spring of 1964.

Should the requirement arise for a permanent naval deployment, or a contingency/limited war situation demand an extensive and continuous naval presence in this area, in-area support using either mobile or fixed bases, or a combination thereof will be required. Since time and cost factors militate against an immediate and significant build-up of mobile support forces, austere logistic anchorage sites with minimum support ashore would provide a desirable economical alternative. In this regard, it is conceivable that rights to utilize certain British controlled facilities on an "as is" basis would provide an expedient alleviation of these problems.

2. USN Position

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the Chagos Archipelago as a prospective site for this facility, but a survey is required before further action can be taken. It is hoped that the UK will grant permission to the US to conduct the site survey following the coming joint discussions in London. (It should be noted that this requirement exists independently on any requirement for a US military presence.)

b. Possible Short-Term Requirements. The U.S. Navy has been directed to provide an American military presence in the Indian Ocean area on an intermittent basis beginning in the spring of 1964. It is expected that initially this force will consist of an attack carrier task group provided by the 7th Fleet, and that it will be deployed there approximately 2 months out of every six. The task group will be self-sustaining, although "show-the-flag" port visits will be scheduled, and some indigenous support will be purchased. It must be recognized, however, that the influences and circumstances which have dictated the intermittent deployments may intensify to the point of requiring a continuous naval presence. In this event, a logistic support anchorage with austere facilities ashore would be desirable to supplement mobile support forces and provide recreation. In order to be most effective, such a support site should conform insofar as practicable to the following criteria:

- (1) Centrally located.
- (2) Of little economic, political importance.
- (3) Of adequate size to provide:

- (a) Deep water anchorage.

- (b) Air strip (with aircraft parking area) for VP and logistic aircraft, and

- (c) POL and ammunition storage.

The anchorage should permit the simultaneous berthing of a CVA, one squadron of DDs, two fleet oilers, an AF, AK, AE, AV, and a repair ship. POL storage should consist of:

250,000 bbls	NSFO
100,000 bbls	JP-5
10,000 bbls	AvGas
5,000 bbls	MoGas

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When required, such a site could be constructed in increments by a Navy Mobile Construction Battalion with advanced base functional components insofar as available.

One island meeting all of the above criteria is Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago. Should a site survey determine that the requirements for the Project KATHY Communications Station can also best be met within the Chagos Archipelago, suitable sites should be reserved to provide for transmitter-receiver separation (25-30 miles) without conflicting with potential real estate requirements for logistic support development on Diego Garcia. Efforts to obtain agreement by the British to reserve control of the Chagos Archipelago with US entry rights should thus be given first priority in the joint discussions.

c. Possible Long-Term Requirements

The political atmosphere which is focusing growing attention on the Indian Ocean/East African area may well call for the projection of an effective capability for air/surface surveillance and possible military response by Western powers to Communist pressure. The UK, however, because of domestic political and economic factors and developments within territories where she still retains bases, may considerably reduce her capability for maintaining bases and forces in this area. If, under these circumstances, the US finds itself committed to a policy of maintaining the Free World influence in the area, or if it becomes necessary to react to actual aggression on the Indian Ocean periphery (either unilaterally, bilaterally, or as part of a SEATO-CENTO effort), one austere base might not be sufficient or suitably placed to support the required magnitude of forces in sustained effort. Therefore, it would seem prudent to broaden our request for reservation of suitable island real estate to the western sector of the Indian Ocean. We should endeavor to obtain a UK commitment to reserve control of at least two such additional islands for our possible use. There are a number of islands meeting the basic criteria enumerated above. A survey should be undertaken which would examine the suitability of the following (not in order of priority):

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Ile Desroches  
Coetivy Island  
Aldabra Islands  
Cosmoledo Islands

Our desire is to have the United Kingdom agree to "set aside" and continue control of selected sites without a concomitant US commitment to undertake any base development in a specific time frame. Our primary purpose in participating in these discussions should be to obtain British assent to US military access to specified real estate in this area, should the requirement arise. Our minimum goal should be assurance of continued British control which will result in the long term availability of these strategic sites. If the trends of the past few years continue, Western-controlled territory in this theater may become autonomous to a degree which will prevent future UK or US use for military support purposes. Action should be taken now toward political realignment of selected islands so that they may remain free of any local vetoes on their use.



MILITARY RATIONALE

London Discussions with United Kingdom, Indian Ocean Islands.

The concept of stockpiling base rights for US use in areas of potential need is not new to the British. The idea was discussed in general terms by Admiral Burke and Admiral Sir Caspar John some years ago, and it is felt that the British military is generally in sympathy with US views.

Following is the military rationale which should be adhered to in the discussions with the British:

a. The United States recognizes the continuing joint US/UK strategic interest in the Indian Ocean Basin and the mutual desirability of maintaining a Western influence in those nations which are susceptible to Communist encroachment. Further, the United States recognizes the necessity of continuing the present balance of military forces which should minimize the possibility of overt military aggression or major Communist subversion.

b. The US is concerned with the growing antagonisms among countries bordering the Indian Ocean; continuing covert expansionist tendencies by the Chinese Communists (who may soon detonate a psychologically impressive nuclear device); and the possibility of an ultimate lessening of British presence in the area. At present, the US has no direct support facilities or rights to use existing allied support facilities between Suez and Singapore.

c. US naval forces which will be intermittently deployed to the Indian Ocean area commencing in the spring of 1964 will be essentially self-sustaining.

d. Should the requirement arise at some future time for a continuous or extensive deployment of US military forces in support of US objectives, it would be desirable to have real estate promptly available that could offer austere support to such forces. The immediate requirement for a DCS/USN communications station however, is independent of any direct military support functions.

e. In the face of emerging local sovereignty, it is essential that strategically desirable island sites be jointly identified at an early date, and separated from territories subject to eventual autonomous status so that continuing US/UK access for an indeterminate period is assured.

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2. In order to be of maximum military effectiveness, the islands should meet the following criteria:

(1) Remote from mainland areas or large, independent island groups.

(2) Of little economic or political importance.

(3) Uninhabited or supporting only small populations.

(4) Of sufficient size and contoured so as to provide a deep water anchorage, a logistic air strip, and minimal POL/ammunition storage.

g. The only centrally located sites meeting the above criteria are the islands of the Chagos Archipelago. Specifically, Diego Garcia appears at this time to offer the best location for a primary support site while one or more other islands in the Archipelago could be used to ensure communications station transmitter-receiver separation. The Chagos Archipelago as an entity appears to be the appropriate geographic and political unit to consider.

h. In the western Indian Ocean, attention has devolved upon the following islands as possible secondary support sites:  
(not in priority order)

Ile Desroches

Coetivy Island

Aldabra Islands

Cosmoledo Islands

i. Should the British agree to identify and reserve suitable real estate for their continuing control in the above context, the US should press for an early unilateral or joint site survey to determine which islands are adequate to support our possible needs.

j. It is believed that these discussions will be most productive if we restrict our requests to a single, centrally located, primary site, and two secondary sites in the western Indian Ocean.

k. The US has no specific plans at this time to commit funds to construction of facilities in this region other than for the communications station. We are interested only in obtaining prompt military access should the need arise.

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1. We should be willing, however, to permit joint usage if facilities are constructed in the future by the United States.

m. Although the British will probably request information on presumed US actions in the event of contingencies with a view to identifying the type of real estate needed, any such discussion should be kept in as general terms as possible. No commitment should be made by the US as to number and type of sites required or forces to be utilized in a given situation.

n. It is, or will become, apparent to the British that the US is in a position to offer little to the UK, in concrete terms, for an agreement by the British to continue their control of selected islands. Emphasis, therefore, must be placed upon our continuing mutual strategic interest in this area, and the advantages of joint usage of any facilities eventually constructed by the United States.

o. The US is interested in the Indian Ocean area on the grounds of preservation of the Free World orientation of many of the surrounding nations. There should be no intimation that we are interested in supplanting the UK as the primary Western force in the Indian Ocean periphery.

p. The immediate requirement for a communications site is independent of a US military presence. No further definitive information can be given on this subject until a site suitability survey takes place. Permission to make this survey at an early date should be requested as a matter of priority. It is envisioned that if the Chagos Archipelago adequately meets this need, there is sufficient additional real estate available to accommodate an austere naval support site.

q. The primary US objective should be to obtain British agreement to permit prompt US access to selected, strategic islands, when required. Our minimum goal should be an assurance of continuing British control of these sites for an indefinite period.

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