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

Op-611B/jw
Ser 00130P61

SECRET

MEMORANDUM OF INFORMATION FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Subj: Gan and Diego Garcia (U)

Encl: (1) Chart of Addu Atoll, a portion of the Survey of the Maldives Islands

1. (U) The purpose of this memorandum is to provide background information concerning British rights on the Maldivian Island of Gan and to examine the possible relationship of Gan to the Diego Garcia project.
2. (U) UK facilities at Addu Atoll include: the RAF staging base on Gan with a single E-W runway extending the entire length of the island in excess of 9000'; a 408' jetty for small craft berthing at the northwestern extremity of the island with depths to 19 fathoms; an RN AO, WAVE VICTOR, on loan to the Air Ministry as a hulk, offering limited black oil and diesel bunkering (16,500T); and a 110 acre communications station on the neighboring island of Hitadu (Hithadoo). Approximately 500 RAF personnel man these facilities.
3. (U) The current Anglo-Maldivian Agreement of 26 July 1965, concluded when the Maldives were granted independence, is the culmination of previous defense and political arrangements of 1887, 1948, 1953, and 1960. Articles of the agreement authorize an unrestricted and exclusive UK military presence in Addu Atoll for Commonwealth defense purposes only. Although the Maldivian Government is specifically prohibited from granting third party rights in the agreed defense areas, no similar article prohibits the UK from making such grants for Commonwealth defense. Courtesy visits by ships and aircraft in accordance with international practice are excepted.
4. (U) The local government is a constitutional monarchy (sultanate) and Sultan Al Ameer Muhammed Farid Didi is the current Chief of State. He is assisted by a popularly elected legislative council (the Majlis) and a cabinet headed by Prime Minister Ibrahim Nasir. The Prime Minister reportedly rules the islands with a tight rein and decides even the smallest issues.
5. (C) In April 1966, Ambassador Lyon (U.S. Ambassador to Ceylon) visited the Maldives to present his credentials to

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the new government. He reported that several officials criticized UK assistance as too little, too late and indicated their desire to terminate the British presence in Addu Atoll. Other than this nascent anti-British bias, Ambassador Lyon stated that the present Maldivian Government appears to be totally unaligned and detached from world problems.

6. (S) In August 1965, France requested permission to transit military aircraft through Gan but was refused. This refusal, however, had a loophole and although Embassy London was unable to determine its precise nature, it was understood that it was motivated by the possibility of future U.S. requests for transit in the event of a "very important U.S. need." Under normal circumstances Embassy London suspected that the UK would reject U.S. requests in the same manner in which they had refused the French.

7. (C) While exploring fueling arrangements for the transit of USS OPPORTUNE and USS SHAKORI from the UK to Subic Bay in December 1965, the UK Ministry of Defense advised ALUSNA London that the USG would have to make a direct approach to the Maldivian Government for permission to call at Gan. The Ministry further stated that the UKG would appreciate it if alternate fueling arrangements could be made for OPPORTUNE and SHAKORI and offered the assistance of an auxiliary oiler from Commander, Far East Forces assets for an underway replenishment. Other arrangements were finally made.

8. (C) Op-61 Comment: U.S.-UK facilities at Diego Garcia will not duplicate UK facilities at Gan. The larger area of Diego Garcia conceivably will permit construction of a more extensive facility than could be constructed at Gan. Use of Diego Garcia will not be limited to Commonwealth defense purposes only nor will Diego Garcia be subject to the vagaries of local politics which, in the Maldives, presently have a budding anti-British complexion. Similarly, no third country restrictions will hamper the use of Diego Garcia by U.S.-UK Allies.

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