

S9/250/64-65 BX 1551

DEF 15 IND-UK

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

XR DEF 15 IND-US

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Action

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Info

NNNNVZCZCLDN821
RR RUEHC RUOSNI RUEDPSA RUEPJS
DE RUDTCR 8580/1 1092012
ZNY SSSSS
R 191919Z APR 67
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUOSNI/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
RUEDPSA/CINCSSTRIKE/CINCEAFSA
RUDLSZ/3RD AF SOUTH RUISLIP UK
RUEPJS/DOD WASHDC
STATE PRNC
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BIOT

019164

1967 APR 19 PM 3 48

SECRET SECTION ONE OF TWO LONDON 8580

LIMDIS

DOD FOR ISA/OSD

SUBJ: BIOT

1. FOLLOWING IS THE DETAILED GUIDANCE DISPATCHED BY THE
FONOFF AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE TO SELECTED BRITISH MISSIONS

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ON BIOT:

"THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IN NEW DELHI HAS RECENTLY BEEN ASKED
SOME SEARCHING QUESTIONS BY INDIAN OFFICIALS ABOUT ALLEGED
MILITARY BASES BEING DEVELOPED BY BRITAIN IN THE INDIAN
OCEAN. A SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE OF TWENTY-FOUR ARE
CURRENTLY CONSIDERING OUR TERRITORIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
AND THERE HAS BEEN SOME PUBLICITY IN THIS COUNTRY ABOUT THE
RECENT PURCHASE OF LAND BY HMG IN THE BIOT AND ABOUT SCIEN-
TIFIC OBJECTIONS TO OUR POSSIBLE USE OF IT.

WE HAVE NO WISH TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SUBJECT: BUT, IF
QUESTIONED YOU MAY DRAW AS NECESSARY ON THE FOLLOWING, WHICH
SUPERSEDES EARLIER GUIDANCE.

(2) ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TERRITORY.

BIOT WAS ESTABLISHED IN NOV 1965 AS A NEW CROWN COLONY BY
THE TRANSFER OF CERTAIN SMALL REMOTE ISLANDS PREVIOUSLY
ADMINISTERED AS PARTS OF MAURITIUS (THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

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INCLUDING DIEGO GARCIA) AND SEYCHELLES (ALDABRA, FARQUHAR AND DESROCHES): THE OBJECT WAS TO MAKE THE ISLANDS AVAILABLE FOR POSSIBLE USE BY THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN GOVTS. THIS WAS WITH THE FULL AGREEMENT OF THE MAURITIUS AND SEYCHELLES GOVTS TO WHOM FULL COMPENSATION IS BEING PAID (3 MILLION POUNDS PAID TO MAURITIUS AND A CIVIL AIRFIELD TO BE BUILT IN SEYCHELLES).

(3) USE OF THE TERRITORY.

BIOT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ENVISAGED AS PROVIDING POTENTIAL SITES FOR TRANSIT, COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT FACILITIES. THE 1967 DEFENSE WHITE PAPER STATED "WE ARE ALSO EXAMINING WHAT BENEFITS WE WOULD GET FROM A NEW STAGING AIRFIELD IN THE BIOT". AS THE DEFENSE SECRETARY SAID ON 16 NOV 1966 WE HAVE "NO PROGRAM FOR CREATING BASES IN BIOT." NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO ESTABLISH ANY DEFENSE INSTALLATIONS IN BIOT.

(4) POPULATION.

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THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE SPREAD OVER BIOT AS A WHOLE IS EXTREMELY SMALL. THEY ARE ESSENTIALLY A MIGRATORY FORCE FROM MAURITIUS AND SEYCHELLES WHO COME AND GO IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEMAND FOR THEIR LABOR IN THE COPRA PLANTATIONS. THEIR NUMBERS FLUCTUATE AND AT MOST REACH AT TIMES 1,500. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY PRECISE RECORDS OF THE LENGTH OF STAY THERE OF INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES.

(5) RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

A. SURVEY. A RRC/MOD SURVEY PARTY VISITED ALDABRA IN SEPT 1966 IN CONNECTION WITH A POSSIBLE WIRELESS RELAY STATION AND IN ORDER TO BRING AN EARLIER (1962) SURVEY FOR A POSSIBLE STAGING AIRFIELD UP TO DATE. US REPS AND BRITISH SCIENTISTS PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY (GUIDANCE NO. 261 OF 9 SEPT 1966).

B. SCIENTIFIC INTEREST. IN FEB, THE ROYAL SOCIETY ISSUED A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS URGING THE CASE FOR THE TOTAL PRESERVATION OF THE ISLAND OF ALDABRA FOR SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION AND THE ABANDONMENT OF ANY PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT AN AIR-

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FIELD ON IT. SIMILAR SCIENTIFIC CONCERN HAS FOUND PUBLIC
EXPRESSION IN THE US (GUIDANCE NO. 28 OF 23 FEB).

C. PURCHASE OF LAND. MOD REPS RECENTLY VISITED BIOT TO
NEGOTIATE THE PURCHASE OF THE FREEHOLD OF CERTAIN OF THE
ISLANDS THE MAJORITY OF WHICH ARE PRIVATELY OWNED. THIS
HAD BEEN PLANNED FROM THE TIME OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BIOT
AND IS A NATURAL NEXT STEP (CLEARLY THE ISLANDS COULD NOT
BE USED FREELY BY EITHER GOVT WHILE REMAINING PRIVATE
PROPERTY).

D. AN ADMINISTRATOR HAS BEEN APPOINTED AND TAKEN UP HIS
DUTIES IN BIOT. HE IS SUBORDINATE TO THE COMMISSIONER OF
BIOT, A POST AT PRESENT OCCUPIED BY THE GOVERNOR OF SEY-
CHELLES.

E. AGREEMENTS (FOR USE ONLY AFTER 24 APRIL). AN ANGLO-US
AGREEMENT COVERING THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH FACILITIES
MIGHT BE CONSTRUCTED AND OPERATED WAS SIGNED IN DEC 1966.
IT IS ESSENTIALLY A FRAME-WORK FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE

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BRITISH AND US GOVTS AND AS SUCH IT WILL ONLY COME INTO
OPERATION IF A DECISION IS TAKEN BY EITHER SIDE TO DEVELOP
FACILITIES. THE AGREEMENT COVERS SUCH ITEMS AS CONSULTATION
BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES OVER ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES WHICH
MAY BE NECESSARY IN THE EVENT OF A DEFENSE REQUIREMENT,
PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES, ETC. AND IS ON SIMILAR LINES TO
AGREEMENTS WE HAVE CONCLUDED WITH THE US ELSEWHERE. THE
AGREEMENT DOES NOT, (REPEAT NOT), SAY ANYTHING ABOUT
SPECIFIC POSSIBLE UTILIZATION OF THE TERRITORY. AT THE SAME
TIME AN (UNRELATED) AGREEMENT GOVERNING THE USE OF A US
SATELLITE TRACKING STATION ALREADY SET UP IN SEYCHELLES WAS
SIGNED BY THE TWO SIDES. BOTH AGREEMENTS WILL BE PUBLISHED
ON 25 APRIL 1967. BRUCE
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F. NUCLEAR MATERIAL. ONE OF THE INDIAN QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE POSSIBLE TRANSIT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS THROUGH BIOT. IF ASKED YOU SHOULD SAY THAT THE MOVEMENT OF SUCH WEAPONS IS A CLASSIFIED MATTER AND OUR POLICY IS NOT TO COMMENT

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ON IT. THIS SHOULD NOT, OF COURSE, BE TAKEN TO IMPLY THAT WEAPONS ARE LIKELY, IN A GIVEN CASE, BE CARRIED.

(6) FOR YOUR OWN INFORMATION, THE SURVEY AT (A) ABOVE CONFIRMED THAT IT WOULD BE TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE TO BUILD AN AIRFIELD AND TO CONSTRUCT SATISFACTORY ANCHORAGE FACILITIES FOR TANKERS OF UP TO 20,000 TONS. SHOULD WE DECIDE TO GO AHEAD WITH DEVELOPING FACILITIES, THE ISLAND COULD LESSEN OUR DEPENDENCE ON OVERFLYING FOREIGN COUNTRIES, ONCE OUR NEW TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT HAVE COME INTO SERVICE."

2. FOREGOING WAS TRANSMITTED TO BRITISH MISSIONS IN PARIS, NEW DELHI, RAWALPINDI, MAURITIUS, SEYCHELLES, UK/UN AND BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICE, NEW YORK. BRUCE
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