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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 25, 1972

SUBJECT: US/UK Talks on Indian Ocean Area
September 25-26, 1972

(First Day)

PARTICIPANTS: (see attached list)

Opening Remarks

Mr. Spiers opened the discussion drawing upon a statement that had been previously circulated to all US participants. In his remarks Mr. Spiers placed the discussions, which must necessarily emphasize military considerations, in proper balance with our more important commercial and political considerations in the Indian Ocean area. He also emphasized the substantially lower priority of our interests in the Indian Ocean area as compared to the Atlantic and Pacific regions.

Mr. Rose responded noting that these talks had their genesis in a meeting between President Nixon and the Prime Minister at Chequers in 1970 where they had agreed to a joint study of the Indian Ocean area. This was subsequently discussed at the FCO/State level when John Thompson visited the US in December 1970 and May 1971. The talks today are, however, a direct follow on from the visits of Mr. Spiers to London in June and Mr. Stoddart in July.

Mr. Rose set forth three general caveats for the discussions:

a. He stressed that there was no inclination on his part to exaggerate or inflate the Indian Ocean problem or a possible reaction thereto. The discussions should be low key with the objective of seeking agreement on how Indian Ocean matters should be approached.

b. He said there were several ways to approach the Indian Ocean and stressed the need to explore the concept of the Indian Ocean as a single unit. There was no intent to duplicate bilateral approaches to particular problems and policies which would naturally fall within the purview of regional bureaus; however, the political-military bureaus offered a middle ground, an opportunity to view the segmented areas as a whole.

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c. There is a need to examine the security problems of the area to see if US and UK interests and views sufficiently coincide to concert efforts, and to what extent we should seek to bring in other governments.

Mr. Rose discussed further the contrasting views of the Indian Ocean. In naval or imperial terms it makes sense to view the Indian Ocean, bordered by some 30 littoral states, as a unity. However, both of our governments tend to consider regional problems in isolation, i.e. Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Neither view is in itself correct.

The new element in this area is the naval presence and the extension of Soviet interests from those of a continental power to those of a world power. Naval power has considerable flexibility in use. The mobility of ships afford an instant inexpensive way of applying influence. While agreeing that there was no threat in military terms of direct Soviet action against US or UK interests, there was however a potential threat to maritime interests which the UK considers vital. The absence of a direct military threat does not mean that we can ignore or let go unanswered the potential threat of harassment to merchant shipping or psychological pressure on littoral countries which Soviet naval power affords.

Mr. Rose enumerated four basic British interests in the Indian Ocean area. First is the importance of maintaining stability and, through stability, western influence in the area. He mentioned several methods by which the British are achieving this, i.e. the Five Power Defense Arrangement, assistance to the Sultan of Oman to contain People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDYR) sponsored subversion, and so forth. Secondly, individual UK commitments in the area form a major British interest, i.e. commitments to the Seychelles, BIOT, Mauritius, and others adjacent but outside the littoral area. Thirdly, Mr. Rose stressed the importance of the strategic air and sea routes to the Far East which are vital for UK reinforcement and support of their Far Eastern interests. An finally, Mr. Rose mentioned UK commercial interests in the area. In 1971 17 percent of British export/import trade was conducted with countries East of Suez; and 62 percent of British oil imports came from the Persian Gulf over Indian Ocean commercial sea routes. In addition, there are large British investments in oil and other ventures throughout the littoral area.

Soviet and Chinese Intentions in the Area

Mr. Robert Stimson of the UK delegation called attention to the previously circulated British paper on this subject. In addition

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he referenced an excellent joint UK/Australian study of June, 1971, which had been passed to the US through the Embassy in Canberra.

Russian presence in the Indian Ocean takes on several forms. Among these naval presence is the new and significant one. Five years ago there was no Soviet naval presence, now a permanent Soviet flotilla averages 5 naval combatants and 8 non-combatants. This does not include the vessels engaged in Bangladesh harbor clearance. These Soviet naval ships, however, have no permanent access to shore facilities.

Soviet fishing fleets are another form of Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean area. While fishing is a legitimate endeavor, it nevertheless affords the Soviets a cover for eventual acquisition of shore facilities.

Soviet presence is also evidenced in commercial and space ventures. Soviet aid and assistance to littoral states predated naval activity and does not appear to have any relationship to it. In all these endeavors, the Soviets have shown a particular interest in the north west corner of the Indian Ocean as well as South Asia. Mr. Stimson then followed with a detailed country by country itemization of Soviet aid and assistance activities.

Mr. Stimson summarized his presentation by drawing a general picture in which the Russians were making a rather significant effort throughout the Indian Ocean area, but one that was not uniformly successful. He expected the Russian naval presence to be maintained and probably intensified. This would be employed to increase Soviet influence and decrease influence hostile to Soviet interests, as befits the role of a world power.

There was general agreement from the US side with Mr. Stimson's assessment. Ambassador Van Hollen inquired about Soviet activities in the Maldives. Mr. Stimson indicated that there was a modest level of Soviet assistance including, for example, the fitting of small deck guns to Maldivean fishing (or patrol) vessels. There had been a visit by a Russian supply ship and East Germany was supplying some communications equipment. The UK delegation suggested that it would be helpful if Ambassador Van Hollen could arrange for an exchange of information after he arrives in Colombo. Mr. Van Hollen then observed that the Ceylonese were frightened by the Indo-Pak War and had become more responsive to US overtures, for example, no longer requiring a nonnuclear declaration for naval ship visits.

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Mr. Moore commented on Soviet interest in increasing their use of Singapore and noted the Indonesians' view of Soviet Indian Ocean activities as part of a grand strategy.

Mr. Rose observed that the discussions so far had shown a fairly good agreement and identity of interests and views. He thought it useful to consider next whether or not it is possible to say there is an overarching Indian Ocean problem which can be distilled from the separate regional problems. Mr. Spiers responded that he would apply the concept of unity to the Indian Ocean almost solely in naval terms. He felt that the naval presence and arms control considerations are the only extent to which it is profitable to consider the Indian Ocean as a whole.

Mr. Rose admitted that this was an intellectually difficult concept; but not only was there unifying naval presence, there was also a unity of strategic interests. For example, he pointed to shipping routes, stressing that this must be an area through which we can move freely. Admiral Scott noted that as a sailor, he had no difficulty connecting a distant country like Egypt with the Indian Ocean. A major Soviet objective was to reopen the Suez Canal for greater access to the Indian Ocean. Mr. Spiers responded that we are also interested in reopening the Canal for different reasons -- an overall Middle East settlement. Ambassador Van Hollen concluded with the observation that, with the possible exception of the Persian Gulf, the US and UK view the Indian Ocean through different prisms, the US having easier naval access via the Pacific and less commercial interests.

US and UK Defense Commitments: Facilities and Deployment of Naval, Military and Air Operational Units in the Area

This section of the discussions was initiated by a JCS presentation, the full text of which has been circulated to all participants separately. The UK delegation questioned several apparent discrepancies in the JCS enumeration of facilities available throughout the Indian Ocean area, pointing to the certain non-availability of Trincomalee, for example, and the omission of several other facilities which could be available to British forces.

Mr. Lloyd-Jones mentioned the possible change of government in Australia, stating that the labor government would be committed to a zero draft which might require a new look at forward deployment in that area.

Admiral Scott stated that it was British defense policy to reinforce their naval forces in the Indian Ocean from time to time,

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generally at two-year intervals. They will be deploying a small force next year consisting of a guided missile ship, a nuclear submarine and escorts. The force will remain in the Indian Ocean for approximately 6 months. (It was later revealed that two Dutch frigates would also participate in this exercise.)

Mr. Rose presented a rather detailed itemization of British air and naval facilities in the Indian Ocean area. He mentioned also that the British had approximately 1,000 officers and men "seconded" to the forces of approximately 11 different littoral states. There is also a large number of ex-British officers who have taken contracts with the military forces in various countries (335 contracted and seconded with the Persian Gulf emirates). Mr. Pickering drew the parallel of our MAAG efforts throughout the area.

Scope for Coordination of and Cooperation in Activities Discussed Above

There was a general discussion of the US difficulty in conceiving of the Indian Ocean as a strategic unity due to the command division under the Unified Command Plan. Where British naval forces worldwide come under one commander-in-chief (CINCFLEET), US naval forces are under separate geographical CINCS whose "backyards" seem to come together in the Indian Ocean. In this area we find MIDEASTFOR under CINCEUR whose theater encompasses the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. The Indian Ocean is divided between CINCLANT and CINCPAC.

General Hanket observed that we have good coordination with the UK as far as Pacific Fleet is concerned, this being accomplished by the quarterly Seventh Fleet scheduling conference. We are now looking into ways and means of improving overall coordination between the three concerned CINCS and the UK. Admiral Scott confirmed that representatives of CINCFLEET and the ANZUK Command attend Seventh Fleet scheduling conferences but even here there are weaknesses in coordination (some nationally secret deployments, updated information on schedule changes, and so forth). Admiral Scott also discussed coordination with CINCUSNAVEUR, CINCLANTFLT, and SACLANT and two-way flow of information through his office in Crystal Plaza. It was generally agreed, however, that the most significant area for improvement would be the consolidation of scheduling and deployment information through one authority in the Pentagon with updated information on schedule changes. This would correspond to the single source of information for British naval deployments and would be of great assistance in interservice coordination.

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Mr. Rose commented on the need for ensuring coordination of ship visits as one of the best ways to exert western influence. He pointed to the incident of last July where the UK, US and France all sent ships at the same time to Mauritius to offset the influence of a visit there by a modern Soviet ship. Perhaps one ship would have sufficed to counter the Soviet visit.

Mr. Rose mentioned that small scale ad hoc joint exercises between our navies could also be accomplished with better flow of information. Admiral Scott referred to such exercises as "PASSEX" (passing exercises) that we frequently accomplish in other areas of the world and could possibly also arrange for the Indian Ocean. He mentioned that two Dutch frigates would be moving into the Indian Ocean with the UK force this coming year, an example of "sharing the load" and a good opportunity for joint exercises.

Mr. Rose summed up this section of the discussions with the following two conclusions: a) the need for better coordination of ship visit arrangements to enhance the political benefits, and b) better arrangements for coordination of joint exercises. The modalities for such coordination should now be achieved by our naval authorities. Mr. Pickering concurred but observed that the US must get its own house in order before we can get the appropriate national services together on this matter.

Mr. Rose moved to other areas requiring coordination. We have a need for more detailed exchange of information regarding afloat support to ensure more effective utilization of Indian Ocean assets. Mr. Lloyd-Jones commented that coordination in surveillance activities was proceeding satisfactorily. This was being handled through ANZUK for identification of resources and there was no basic dissatisfaction evidenced.

Moving to shore based support, Mr. Rose asked what further plans the US had for Diego Garcia and the BIOT in general. Mr. Stoddart responded that the Defense plan as presented to Congress had a \$19.6 million ceiling and that he was not aware of any further plans for Diego Garcia other than as an austere communications facility. Plans for dredging a turning basin are in train and modest refuelling facilities are also planned for logistic aircraft, but nothing further is planned at this time. Mr. Rose stated that at one time there was suggestion of Australian usage of Diego Garcia for maritime surveillance. Mr. Stoddart responded that this is now a dead issue since the Australians have not taken any initiative on this subject. Mr. Pickering added that at the time this was raised it was with regard to possible contingency uses related to other activities.

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British and US Indirect Military Measures in the Area

Mr. Rose opened the second day of discussions by outlining the indirect military measures by which the British maintain a degree of influence with a number of countries on the Indian Ocean littoral. These measures are described in detail in the British paper on the subject. He noted that there seemed to be a great deal of complementarity between US and UK programs around the Indian Ocean. He suggested that this complementarity provided a basis for US-UK coordination and cooperation.

Mr. Lloyd-Jones said that the main value of UK indirect military measures is that they help the UK to maintain useful links with the countries of the area. The main object is to promote self-reliance in the defense field and to preempt other possible influences from the USSR or China. He said that the British objective is "good relations" rather than specific military goals. Lloyd-Jones said that training courses in the UK or UK service personnel on loan for training purposes are some of the best examples of using military channels to keep open lines of communications with potential leaders in the littoral states. Malaysia has as many as 500 trainees in the UK in any one year. There are about 80 UK officers on loan to Singapore and about 100 Singaporean students in the UK. The Malaysians are showing interest in maritime operations and joint warfare.

Lloyd-Jones said that the Persian Gulf countries fall into a second category. They have no inhibitions about having European officers in responsible positions in the local armed forces. There are about 250 UK officers on loan who, with certain safeguards, serve as an integral part of UK forces. Mr. Lloyd-Jones stressed that the UK has gone some way toward counteracting the effects of the withdrawal of UK combat units from the Gulf.

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A third area consists of countries with which the UK has no traditional or treaty relations. Contact with these countries is largely through visits by the Royal Engineers, et al. Mr. Lloyd-Jones said that these activities should be put in balance with the concept of the unity of the Indian Ocean which we all agreed yesterday only hangs together rather tenuously as a unit mainly in terms of a naval presence.

Mr. Rose elaborated on his thesis that there is a certain complementarity in US/UK activities in the Indian Ocean by noting that the US has a considerable effort in Ethiopia while the UK has a considerable effort in Kenya. The UK has 34 people in the Sudan while the US has a considerable effort in Saudi Arabia. (The UK has 84 Arabians in the UK for training). The UK has 111 Iraqi students in the UK for training and about 800 Iranians each year. The UK has twice as many Indians in training as the US while in Indonesia the bulk of the training is provided by the US, the UK having only 4 Indonesian students in training. Malaysia has 500 students in the UK and Singapore has 100 students in the UK.

Mr. Pickering said that he too was struck by the similarity as well as the complementarity of the US and UK efforts alluded to by Mr. Rose. He noted that there is considerable national coordination which already exists between US and UK Embassies in the field. Mr. Pickering pointed out that there is in the present US administration an emphasis on moving countries in the direction of self-reliance. The Democratic Congress, however, tends to cut military assistance funds and to force the programs in directions we would not necessarily prefer. He did not see the same degree of financial uncertainty in the UK programs. He said that while predictions are difficult at this stage we see generally the same level of assistance in Indonesia, Ethiopia and Thailand for the coming year. However, we are also faced with a requirement to reduce Military Advisory units by 15% this month. These are the kinds of pressures our assistance program is under from the Congress.

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Iran can be called a grant assistance program graduate. Iran is now paying for its assistance, which largely derives from Iran's unique ability to pay. The Saudi's are also on a paying basis.

The US does not second officers although we do have MAAG's and military training teams. These teams are not reflected in the figures we provided in the papers prepared for these talks. Mr. Pickering said that the US is happy to have the UK take the lead in the Gulf and hopes that the UK will continue to do so. He emphasized that coordination between our Embassies in the field is the most useful and practical channel for liaison.

Mr. Pickering also asked to have in chart form the figures which Mr. Rose mentioned earlier.

Mr. Rose said that the figures would be provided as soon as they could be set up in useful form. Mr. Noyes asked Mr. Rose how the UK balanced out its arms sales policy in the Gulf. Mr. Rose's answer was vague and non-committal. He said that frankly the balancing act has been difficult and the British don't know how long they can continue it. They have a special problem in Oman where they are providing assistance against rebels from the PDRY. The need for Masirah provides added incentive for the UK policy toward Oman. Regarding sales, Mr. Rose said the UK will by and large not restrain sales where there are buyers in the Gulf.

Mr. Lloyd-Jones said that there does not seem much room for expansion of seconding officers to the Gulf, and as UK training costs to the client go up the client tends to look for other sources of training since the client pays many of the training costs. (Some training is subsidized by HMG).

General Hackett said that the US finds that we get the biggest return from our investment in the training of officers.

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Mr. Pickering said that there is a particular tendency in our Government to try to train potential leaders in such things as resource management. We tend to encourage early achievement of self-sufficiency in the more mechanical skills.

Mr. Stoddart asked if the British had any projections for their participation in Five-Power exercises.

Admiral Scott replied that in fulfillment of the UK intention which was originally expressed when the FDPA was first established, a British squadron, including two Dutch frigates, would enter the Indian Ocean, probably sometime next year. The force will exercise with the Malaysians and Singaporeans and the ANZUK force at Singapore and will doubtless try to exercise with the French, who have some maritime patrol aircraft stationed at Malagasy. He said they will also exercise with US forces whenever they encounter them and perhaps also with Australian or New Zealand forces.

Mr. Sutherland noted that the UK is planning to establish a military assistance program in Bangladesh. Mr. Pickering said that the US has no plans for going ahead with programs in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh.

Mr. Rose recalled that Mr. Pickering had mentioned useful cooperation between US and UK missions in the field and also ad hoc exchanges in Washington. He said that it still seems that it could be useful to have a periodic exchange of the sort of information discussed above so that we can locate gaps in our two programs and look at our two programs with our respective regional bureaus to see if there are any things we can usefully do to fill in the gaps and to see if we can usefully coordinate our efforts.

Mr. Pickering replied that he personally had no difficulty with exchanging information on past activities on an ad hoc basis. We do, he said, have difficulty with joint planning. We are always ready to discuss past activities with the UK Embassy and we could also make our Embassy in London aware of what we are doing with the Indian Ocean area so that this information could be passed on in London.

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Cooperation with Third Countries

Regarding ANZUK, Mr. Rose said that the essential form of the ANZUK machinery is ad hoc planning for Southeast Asia and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. A planning conference meets in Canberra and is attended by US-UK-NZ Chiefs of Staff. The main product so far has been its study entitled "Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean" which he thought had been made available to the CIA and perhaps to State as well.

The essential question is whether it would be useful to invite Australia to join us in any future talks on the Indian Ocean.

The UK has only recently agreed to bilateral staff talks with Iran concerning arrangements regarding the Indian Ocean.

There has been a suggestion that the UK and France coordinate maritime surveillance activities after French maritime surveillance activities have begun in the Malagasy Republic. Mr. Rose said that the UK would be interested in US plans for intelligence exchange with the French which were mentioned in the paper given to the UK delegation prior to the meeting.

Mr. Pickering said that the US is interested in coordination and cooperation on a parallel basis with both the UK and the Australians, but he said we would like to reflect further on what form this parallelism should take.

General Hanket said that we do not know what the arrangements will be with the French except that they will involve the exchange of information of interest to CINCUSNAVEUR.

Mr. Rose asked if there might be some room for a tri-lateral US-UK-French exchange rather than two bilateral exchanges.

Mr. Pickering replied that it did seem to be useful to complete the third side of this triangle so that we don't find our own intelligence information coming back to us.

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Regarding the French view of the Indian Ocean, Mr. Stimson said that the French are concentrating very much on their own local interests in former colonies and they seem to hope that the US and the UK will take care of the area as a whole unit.

Indian Ocean Arms Control

Mr. Pickering informed the UK delegation that US opposition to Indian Ocean Peace Zone proposals, like the Ceylonese proposal, remains unchanged. We believe such a zone would create a special regime for the Indian Ocean and that accompanying restrictions on high seas freedom would negatively affect the chances of resolving these issues at the forthcoming Law of the Sea (LOS) Conference. Other negative effects include possible encouragement for similar regional arrangements elsewhere, and reduction of strategic mobility.

We oppose the creation of a nuclear free area for the same reasons and because it is not in our interest to in any way limit the flexibility of our strategic forces. Concerning limitations on military deployment by external powers in the Indian Ocean, Mr. Pickering told the British delegation that we have had two general and non-productive contacts with the Soviets over the past 15 months which did not reveal any Soviet interest in arms control arrangements. We do not presently intend to approach the Soviets again, but if they respond to our earlier contacts we would consider any proposal they might suggest. We consider that the potentially undesirable features of a specifically worded naval limitation could be avoided by a general understanding to avoid naval arms competition in the Indian Ocean.

Mr. Pickering emphasized that it is US policy to seek to avoid a major power military competition in the Indian Ocean. He also said that we do not plan to increase the size of our permanent presence, although we will make qualitative improvements and schedule periodic temporary deployments.

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Admiral Doyle outlined the relationships of Indian Ocean arms control to the larger Law of the Sea (LOS) issues.

Mr. Rose expressed great interest in Admiral Doyle's LOS background statement relating LOS to the US contacts with the USSR regarding arms control in the Indian Ocean.

Mr. Rose said that the UK agrees with the US position on the Ceylonese Peace Zone proposal for the same reasons outlined by Mr. Pickering. He noted, however, that the problem is what should be done in the UN if it comes up again. Mme Bandaranaike has reportedly written to the littoral states to suggest a meeting on this subject. The Indians opposed such a meeting. He said the US and UK should try to dissuade the Ceylonese but more sensibly we should get Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia to try to dissuade the Ceylonese. He also noted that the Ceylonese have also informed the UK that their resolution might be modified to "take into account" existing base arrangements in the Indian Ocean.

Mr. Rose said that we should encourage Mme Bandaranaike not to water down her resolution, since that will attract more supporting votes and isolate the US and UK in the UN.

Mr. Pickering noted that there are also dangers in having a stronger resolution than passed last time.

Mr. San Juan pointed out that a special regime for the Indian Ocean could have a domino effect, leading to a coalition of littoral and archipelago states at the LOS conference.

Mr. Rose persisted, however, saying that there was still something to be said for having a resolution which would enlarge the group of abstrainers. He said that perhaps Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia could be persuaded to prevail on the other littorals to abstain.

Mr. Moore pointed out that in the UN vote only the Singaporeans abstained. Malaysia and the Indonesians voted for the Ceylon resolution because of its vague, general and laudatory nature.

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Concluding Remarks

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Rose characterized the talks as having been very useful. He noted that neither the US nor the UK wants to be too ambitious in the Indian Ocean. Neither side wants to exaggerate the problems there or the measures required to cope with them. He expressed gratification that we were able to cover more varied ground than either side originally thought possible.

Mr. Rose noted that both sides had agreed generally on the problem which he said has arisen partly from Soviet Naval presence but more from Soviet efforts to extend their influence worldwide. He was, however, not sure we were agreed on the need to see the area as a single whole. In this connection he noted that the differing US and UK geographic circumstances influenced our respective concepts of the Indian Ocean as a unit. He said, however, that there is an element, symbolized by the Soviet Naval presence, which unifies the concept of the Indian Ocean for both nations.

Mr. Rose said that an exchange of collated information on movements scheduling would help to avoid schedule conflicts and would conserve resources. He said he believed the US had agreed to look and see if collation could be achieved in order to effect coordination of visits and enhance exercises of passage.

After noting that the US and UK complement each other in indirect military measures, Mr. Rose pointed out that both sides agreed that although they would not attempt to coordinate activities they would exchange information on what we have been doing in the Indian Ocean so that each would know where the other was particularly active.

Mr. Rose thought follow-up action would be required concerning cooperation with other countries. He also suggested a further exchange regarding US plans for the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). He said that coordination of afloat support would probably have to be

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handled on an ad hoc basis. He also suggested that a trilateral navy-to-navy exchange of information with the French would be better than two bilateral exchanges.

Mr. Rose noted that we had agreed that if Australia was to be invited to any future conference on the Indian Ocean, New Zealand would also be invited. He said, however, that the UK is concerned about excluding the French and others but still sees some use in future exchanges. He said that we still had not resolved the question of whether there should be a further stocktaking - which the UK would invite the US to attend in London in about 6 months. Mr. Rose also said he would like to see this kind of exchange, on a less formal basis - perhaps through our Embassies - about twice a year.

Mr. Pickering said that the US shares very generally the points made by Mr. Rose. He said the US would consider whether we should undertake a further stock-taking and expressed appreciation for the British flexibility on the channels to be used in any future contacts. The US will convey its views through the Embassy in Washington. Mr. Pickering agreed that the US and UK tend to see the Indian Ocean in different ways. We do see, he said, the need to begin discussions among our own naval commanders and to pass information on passage exercises, etc. Mr. Pickering noted that the US sees both foreign naval presence and arms control as unifying factors in the Indian Ocean. Mr. Pickering agreed with Mr. Rose's formulation of the benefits of exchanges on what the US and UK are doing on the Indian Ocean and said that it may produce benefits in the complementarity of our respective activities. Mr. Pickering also pointed up the need for cooperation in the UN on Indian Ocean matters and said we need to look at measures for continuing and enhancing US-UK cooperation between our Embassies in the field as well.

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