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A-1038

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CINCLANT, CINCSTRIKE, CINCPAC, POL-9 NMAHE  
ANALYSIS BRANCH

FROM : Amembassy LONDON

DATE: June 19, 1969

SUBJECT : BIOT - British Paper on "The Ilios: UN  
Consideration"

REF : London 4733

*W/Loc/TJ*

DOD FOR OSD/ISA

We enclose the Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
paper mentioned in paragraph 4 of the referenced  
telegram.

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.4

NW 26962  
By TB/DM Date 5/6/10

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London A

The Ilois: United Nations Considerations

Population

The population of the Chagos Archipelago in March 1968 was in the region of 800 men, women and children. It is difficult to be precise about the number at present, since the islanders are accustomed to moving about quite freely. The indications are that the total has since fallen, and the figure of 800 can be taken as a maximum. In March 1968 there were 373 (56 Mauritian and 317 Seychellois) contract labourers and dependents who had no long term links with Chagos. The remainder (about 424) were dual nationals of Mauritius and the U.K. and Colonies, known as Ilois, who can claim to have their main roots in Chagos although they too are contract labourers without fixed assets. In addition there are about 400 Ilois (adults and children) now in Mauritius for whose resettlement the Mauritian Government regard H.M.G. as responsible.

Initially it was believed that the number of Ilois was relatively small, but between 1965, when BICOF was established, and 1968 it became clear that the number of those who could claim to be Ilois was greater than had been estimated. Furthermore, although the number is still small, they may present a more awkward problem of status than had been foreseen. It has always been envisaged that, as islands became needed for defence purposes, any workers who need to be displaced would be resettled elsewhere; and when Mauritius became independent in 1968 we succeeded in having the Ilois included among those who automatically became Mauritian citizens on independence. After independence they no doubt continued to regard themselves as Mauritians and they may be so regarded by the Government of Mauritius; but we could not take away from the Ilois their right to citizenship of the U.K. and Colonies by way of connection with Chagos (e.g. by birth there). Nor could we remove the possibility, which is a growing one as the years go by and as more children and grand-children are born, that, regarding themselves as people of Chagos, some of them might one day claim a right to remain in the BICOF by virtue of their citizenship of the U.K. and Colonies; or have such a claim made on their behalf.

United Nations Considerations

As an administering power, the United Kingdom accepts "as a sacred trust" under Chapter XI of the U.N. Charter several obligations towards "peoples" who "have not yet attained a full measure of self-government"; in particular "to ensure ... their political, economic, social and educational advancement" and "to develop self-government".

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At the time of the establishment of BICT, H.M.G. were aware that a new Colony was being created but it was not envisaged that there would be any permanent inhabitants. Indeed the islands were chosen because H.M.G. and the U.S. Administration especially wished to have complete freedom of manoeuvre, uncomplicated by internal political situations. On this assumption, assurances were given in the U.N. and elsewhere that the present inhabitants are essentially migrant contract labourers and their families who would, if necessary, be moved and resettled. H.M.G. did not need to deploy this aspect in detail because no interest was shown in these people at home and the attack in the U.N. was devoted entirely to "the disruption of the territorial integrity of Mauritius" and to the "military base" aspect. These attacks virtually petered out when Mauritius became independent without objecting to the detachment of her former dependencies and no plans to construct facilities matured. Furthermore BICT has never been inscribed on the agenda of any U.N. body as a colonial territory.

Over half of the population of the whole BICT (that is including the western half, as well as the Chagos Archipelago) are Seychellois, with a small proportion of Mauritians who cannot claim U.K. citizenship. They represent little problem in U.N. terms. The problem of the Ilois is so far unknown outside British and perhaps Mauritian Government circles. When the Diego Garcia project is announced, it is expected that the attack in the U.N. will be on the establishment of a "military base" in a dependent territory; but this could amount to no more than the blame attached to H.M.G. for allowing military facilities in many other British territories. If the attack on the Diego Garcia project is sustained until the autumn session of the General Assembly, curiosity may be expressed about the present inhabitants. Provided H.M.G. have plans for resettling them outside BICT, which could be carried out in the near future with the friendly agreement of the parties involved (principally the Mauritian Government and the Ilois themselves) we could continue to refer to the inhabitants generally as essentially migrant contract labourers and their families. But we would find it difficult to continue to describe the Ilois as essentially migratory, if H.M.G. do not chose to resettle them outside BICT or if there proved to be no acceptable place to which they could migrate. In that event H.M.G. would run the risk - if the numbers and character of the Ilois became known to Parliament or in the U.N. - of being forced to acknowledge a Charter responsibility to develop self-government and social services for an irremovable population with all the consequences that that will imply. All this points in favour of an agreed solution leading to the complete evacuation of Chagos which would enable us to maintain that BICT, having no "inhabitants", does not come within the scope of Chapter XI of the United Nations Charter.

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A-4509  
London

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G/PM

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

3 September, 1968

Dear Ron.

Defence Facilities in the Indian Ocean

When you called on Richard Sykes on 5 July you said that you had been instructed by the State Department to seek the agreement in principle of Her Majesty's Government to a proposal by the Department of Defense to establish a facility on Diego Garcia. This facility would comprise:-

- (a) austere communications installations;
- (b) POL storage;
- (c) an 8,000-foot runway;
- (d) anchorage dredging.

I understand that the facility would take 36 months to become operational and 48 months to be completed. You emphasised that implementation of the project was subject to final approval and release of funds by the United States Government.

I have been instructed by the Secretary of State to inform you that Her Majesty's Government are prepared to give their approval in principle to this project. There are, however, a number of issues which arise in the connexion; these are discussed below.

① First, the normal extent of British participation in the project will be the flying of the British flag over the facility and the provision of one or more liaison officers. (We shall need to consider the extent to which the Commissioners of the B.I.O.T. and the British Services should be represented on Diego Garcia.) However, British Naval ships and military

/aircraft

Mr. R. I. Spiers,  
Embassy of the United States of America.

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aircraft will have full right of access to the facility at all times under arrangements to be mutually agreed.

② Secondly, the administrative details of the project will need to be the subject of detailed negotiation before construction of the facility is due to begin; such negotiation might form part of the discussions on an Agreement to govern the establishment and administration of the facility which, on the analogy of that formerly planned for Aldabra, will presumably have to be reached in due course. In particular, given the need to establish Mauritian and Seychellois good will for this project it will be necessary to have regard to the terms of paragraph 7(a) of the 1966 Exchange of Notes on the availability for defence purposes of the British Indian Ocean Territory, which required the maximum practicable use of workers from Mauritius and Seychelles. Diego Garcia was part of Mauritius before the constitution of the British Indian Ocean Territory in 1965, and the Mauritius Government has naturally always hoped that Mauritians (and these would naturally include those inhabitants of the British Indian Ocean Territory of Mauritian descent) would be accorded priority in employment on any construction work undertaken there. This point was raised by Mauritius Ministers in 1965 when the creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory was under discussion. In the context of administrative arrangements, it is also worth mentioning the fact that there are at present about 380 people living in Diego Garcia. None of these people own land or houses and they cannot be classed as permanent inhabitants. The Government of the British Indian Ocean Territory will have to resettle elsewhere those who will be displaced by the establishment of the facility. Broadly speaking there are two ways in which this problem could be tackled. On the one hand, there are arguments in favour of resettling all the present population in such a way as to avert any possibility of their making politically embarrassing claims at some future date. If these arguments were to be accepted it might be best to move the present population out of the territory altogether. On the other hand, transfer of the whole population to some place or places outside the British Indian Ocean Territory might attract undesirable publicity. In that case, it might be best to resettle the present inhabitants of Diego Garcia by redeployment in the copra industry, to which they are accustomed, on other islands of the Chagos group. This could be undertaken with minimal administrative inconvenience and might well prove acceptable to the present inhabitants. In order to decide on the most suitable course of action, we shall need further information on two points. First, an early decision will be required whether all the present population of Diego Garcia will have to be moved or whether some will

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no be offered employment during and after the construction phase. The nature of that decision will condition all subsequent planning. Secondly, we shall wish to have as soon as possible more details about the eventual size of the facility and in particular which, if any, of the other islands in the Chagos Archipelago might in your view be required for further development.

This information will also be needed in order to give further consideration to what may well be the most difficult problem raised by the proposal to develop Diego Garcia: how and when to make the project public knowledge. This problem is no doubt exercising the minds of the United States Government and it will clearly be necessary for both Governments to act in concert over it. Once again, there are, as we see it, two conflicting considerations here. The first of these is to avoid disturbing the Governments of India and Mauritius by appearing to conceal from them the fact that the United States Government have decided to develop a facility at Diego Garcia. From this viewpoint it is essential to take the Indian Government (and the Government of Mauritius) into our confidence before there is any possibility of it becoming publicly known or rumoured that your Government have definite plans for the development of Diego Garcia. The timing of any diplomatic moves on these lines would of course be a matter for further consultations between our two Governments. On the other hand, we must bear in mind the inevitable hostility of a majority of members at the United Nations to this project and do what we can to alleviate this. Our Mission in New York thinks that the timing of any public announcement about the project will be particularly important. So far as possible they would prefer any such announcement not to be made before the end of the coming session of the General Assembly. This is for the tactical reason that they think it better that as long a period as possible should elapse between the discussions in the Committee of Twenty-Four earlier this year of the decision not to proceed with Aldabra and the announcement of any new proposal to develop facilities in the British Indian Ocean Territory. We have a number of ideas on how we might best reconcile these views on the timing of the public announcement and any private approach to other interested parties. Obviously this is something which we shall need to discuss in greater detail with your Government and, as I mentioned above, we shall need more information about the extent of the development on Diego Garcia in order to decide the best course of action.

/...Our

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Our two Governments will also need to consult closely together and take concerted action to counter, and where possible preempt, the hostile reactions to the project which may be expected, from certain governments, both individually and at the United Nations. We shall also wish to concert any approaches which our respective Governments may want to make to friends and allies who might be expected to take a sympathetic view of the development of a staging facility at Diego Garcia, e.g. those in South East Asia and Australasia. While the details of when and how to take these various diplomatic initiatives (whether to the Indians, the Mauritians, the United Nations, or our friends and allies) remain to be settled, it will of course, be necessary to take the most stringent precautions to guard against any inadvertent leakage of information.

A final point, of which we have only recently become aware, concerns the scientific aspect. You will see from the enclosed copy of Dr. Stoddart's report on Diego Garcia to the Royal Society that he makes certain recommendations as to the future of the island in the event of military development. None of these recommendations seems at first sight to raise any serious problems: the most significant is perhaps the suggestion that the three small islets of West Island, Middle Island and East Island - which he understood from informal discussions would not be required for defence purposes - should be considered nature reserves. This is something we shall need to look at more closely when we start discussions on future administrative arrangements.

To sum up, Her Majesty's Government are prepared to agree to the proposed development of a facility on Diego Garcia by the United States Government on the understanding that:-

- ① ✓ (a) normal British participation will be the provision of one or more Liaison Officers and the flying of the British flag over the facility;
- ② (b) British naval ships and military aircraft shall have full right of access to the facility at all times under arrangements to be mutually agreed;
- ③ (c) the administrative details of the project, particularly as regards use of local labour, the arrangements for accommodating the scientific interest, and the resettlement of the present inhabitants, shall be the subject of separate negotiation in due course;

① no  
② out of D6  
PB & S OK but may require add more

/(d)

5 or 5?

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- ①✓ (d) Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government will agree in advance any action, such as submission of details of the project to Congress, which would make the proposal public knowledge;
- ①✓  
②✓  
③ only in certain instances  
I, M, A, NZ (e) Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government will concert measures to counter or preempt hostile reactions to the project, and will agree in advance the details of any approaches to the Governments or those countries most closely concerned with the development of this project, such approaches probably being required well before any action under (d) above;
- ①✓ (f) in order to assess more clearly how the points at (c), (d) and (e) above should be handled, the United States Government will provide further information about the eventual size of the establishment on Diego Garcia.

Yours ever

Alan Brooke Turner.

(A. Brooke Turner)

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 London

(Copy of a draft report by Dr. D. R. Stoddart on his visit to Diego Garcia)

Conservation at Diego Garcia Atoll

At the request of the Royal Society, a scientific party consisting of Dr. D. R. Stoddart (Department of Geography, Cambridge) and Mr. J. D. Taylor (Department of Palaeontology, British Museum (Natural History)) spent the month of July 1967 at Diego Garcia Atoll, Chagos Archipelago, attached to H.M.S. Vidal and an American military survey party. The aim of this visit was to bring up to date the general account of Diego Garcia produced by the Percy Sladon Expedition in 1905, and to make any necessary conservation proposals which might be required if development of the atoll takes place. Also present on the atoll were Dr. H. A. Fehlmann and Mr. C. F. Rhyme, both of the Smithsonian Institution, but these two workers concentrated on their own fields of marine fish and marine algae and apparently had not been asked to consider conservation aspects.

We camped at West Point for most of the month on Diego, with a shorter period at Northwest Point. For an atoll with so long a land rim, a month was too short a time to adequately cover all aspects of the ecology of the atoll. We concentrated on topography and beach sediments, lagoon floor deposits, flora and vegetation, intertidal and shallow water marine communities (especially the mollusca and crustacea), and to a lesser extent the insects, reptiles and birds. Large collections were made in these groups, except for the insects, reptiles and birds. Apart from casual observation, little information was gathered on the human use of the atoll. Our collections are supplemented by those of the Smithsonian workers on algae and fish. Most of our collections have now been identified, and a full account of the results, with contributions by several specialists, is nearing completion for publication after clearance in the Atoll Research Bulletin. A list of contents of this report is attached.

/reported X The land vegetation of Diego Garcia is dominated by coconut palms, and the atoll is really an extended coconut plantation, with continuous and heavy human interference. The native flora was a small one, and is now heavily supplemented by introduced weeds and cultivated plants. There are no large native land animals other than birds; a mud tortoise previously/ is now extinct and may itself have been introduced. Rats swarm everywhere, and there is a small population of feral donkeys. Birds are few both in species and numbers. The land birds include a fody and a dove, both of which may be subspecifically distinct. The mynah and cattle egret, both recent introductions, are common near settlements. Sea and shore birds are not

/common.



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London

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common. The fairy tern and brown noddy are most numerous, but only one frigate was seen over the main island, and no boobies. Only the three small islets near the mouth of the lagoon are relatively undisturbed, with some Hernandia woodland, and possible small breeding colonies of terns, noddies and possibly frigates.

By contrast with the uninteresting land biota, that of the seaward reef flats and lagoon shores is diverse and plentiful, with large populations of crabs and molluscs. The intertidal sand flats of the "barachois" form a habitat unusual on coral atolls, and partly owe their existence to the absence of mangroves on Diego. In spite of the lack of tins and of facilities for marine work during this reconnaissance, it is clear that much further work is needed on marine studies on this atoll.

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London

Recommendation

We therefore recommend the following in the event of military developments proceeding on Diego Garcia:

- ✓ 1. The three small islets of West Island, Middle Island and East Island at the mouth of the lagoon be considered nature reserves, and access to them limited, in order to preserve the natural woodland as a habitat for breeding seabirds and the turtledove which are most plentiful there. We have ascertained informally that there are no proposals for installations on any of these islands. All these islands are of considerable geomorphic interest.
- ✓ 2. Easier access to the atoll following development would be advantageous for marine studies, and we hope that provision can be made for occasional visitors to study marine fauna and flora of Diego. Such provisions would include transportation to and from the atoll, accommodation, and access or storage for a boat and outboard motor. Because of the nature of marine work, it might be more convenient for the deeper-water aspects of such an investigation to form part of a larger single expedition, but for shore work to be spread over a period of years as individuals become interested. Such work could form a natural extension, in some cases, of work at Aldabra Atoll.
3. If development proceeds, an entomologist should visit the atoll before construction is too advanced, with instructions to collect all smaller land invertebrates. This group is the only one which suffered major neglect during our work.
4. With easier access it should be possible to conduct preliminary ecological surveys of the other islands of the Chagos Archipelago in BIOT. Several of these are very much wetter than Diego Garcia, are reputedly less disturbed, and are said to have denser vegetation and many more birds. The latest general accounts are those of the Percy Sladon Expedition in 1905. Such reconnaissance might form part of a general ecological survey of BIOT.

We would also like to point out that our work was much hindered by lack of access to air photographs, sets of which were in use on the atoll by the military parties. These photographs were classified and we were not allowed to see them, and though we have since obtained them, the lack of photographs and maps in the field led to much loss of time and decreased efficiency. In future surveys of this sort, steps should be taken to prevent situations of this sort arising.

We thank the Captain and crew of H.M.S. Vidal, the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Survey Party, and the Manager of the Diego Garcia settlement for their great assistance in this survey.





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Enclosure 1  
London A-1767

Grosvenor Square

October 6, 1969

Jenkin Thomas, Esq.  
Defence Policy Department  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Whitehall, S.W. 1

D-1506

Dear Jenkin:

You wrote me on August 19 about the meteorological station at Diego Garcia. I am now able to confirm that if we construct a facility at Diego Garcia, the United States Government will undertake to provide to Mauritius for the World Weather Watch, and to Her Majesty's Government, *the same* meteorological observations now being furnished by *the* Mauritian station on Diego Garcia.

We would have no objection to Her Majesty's Government confirming at the October meeting of the WMO Regional Association for Africa that this information will continue to be furnished, provided that no reference is made to any future assumption of responsibility for the service by the United States Government or United States Navy.

Sincerely yours,

Gerald Oplinger  
Politico-Military Affairs

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No. 2

London A 1701



Defence Policy Department,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
London S.W.1

(DP 15/5)

13 October, 1969

Dear Jerry,

Meteorological Station on Diego Garcia

Thank you for your letter of 6 October about the Meteorological Station on Diego Garcia.

2. I provide below answers to the questions about the work of the Station that you put to the Department when I was on leave:

(i) Type of observations?

Surface synoptic and upper air observations  
(Radiosonde and Radarwinde)

(ii) The number of times per day that observations are made?

Surface	7 per day
Radiosonde	1 per day
Radarwinde	2 per day

(iii) How is the data transmitted (by radio or cable)?

Radio

(iv) To which points is the data sent and what are the links?

Mauritius (point to point link).

(v) What is the present manning position i.e. Staff levels etc?

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6 (plus 1 or 2 locals employed on general duties).

(vi) How many would be required if the US Navy take over the Station?

Difficult to forecast. Manning would depend on type or equipment used.

*Yours truly,*

(J. Thomas)

Mr. G. Oplinger,  
Embassy of the United  
States of America.

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