

2005 POL-MIL TALKS  
Colonel Stutzriem's Opening Comments

On behalf of the Ambassador Likins, I want to extend to you and your delegation the same type of hospitality that you extended to us when you hosted the annual U.S./UK talks in London last year. While this is not London and certainly not Honolulu, where we held the 2003 Talks, we're all very happy to have you here today and look forward to a productive two days of dialogue on the many crucial issues surrounding our mutual interests in Diego Garcia. I'd like to introduce my colleagues, all of whom are very pleased to participate in this year's talks.

(Introductions)

During these talks, we have great hope that, together, we will be able to advance our mutual interests. Our discussions will cover issues that involve political, economic, environmental, security, and jurisdictional concerns. We believe that the current legal, political and security environment provides an excellent framework to accommodate the interests of both parties.

Our unique strategic partnership is common ground, and need not be recounted. What we've mutually accomplished during past globe spanning operations, and what we accomplished in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the Tsunami effort as well as the Global War on Terrorism are reminders of the tremendous benefits that accrue from our special relationship. That relationship is based on shared strategic visions and goals, which form a basis for dialogue, even when our views are not exactly identical.

Given the strategic importance of secure forward operating bases in today's world, the United States Government is particularly grateful to Her Majesty's government for this valuable partnership. Since the Talks last year, there has been an ongoing exchange of letters between our governments, and we've progressed on several significant environmental, legal, logistics, command-relations, and foreign employment concerns. I expect this positive trend to continue.

With that in mind, we hope that you agree that our common objective with regard to Diego Garcia is to ensure that the national security interests of our governments are protected. Neither of us wants to open the Chagos Archipelago to activities that could adversely effect the security of Diego Garcia, especially given our superb track record in events such as Iraq, Afghanistan and the Tsunami effort, as well as our continuing efforts in the Global War on Terrorism. Questions related to physical security of the facilities, coordination of effort and jurisdictional responsibility between our government's representatives will be discussed if not resolved so that we may strengthen our mutual support against external threats.

We realize that for the productive use of Diego Garcia to continue, concerns expressed by the United Kingdom, Mauritius and the former inhabitants of the Archipelago must be addressed in as a constructive and open manner as possible. We

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look forward to working with you to chart a course forward that preserves and advances our mutual long-term interests and strategic partnership.

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