

Authority 100-9023
By 10 NARA Date 8/13

April 13, 1971

Honorable John A. Blatnik
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Blatnik:

Thank you for your letter to Mr. Abshire of April 6 concerning the construction of a communications facility at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. We have on previous occasions received inquiries concerning points raised by Mr. Tam Dalyell, Member of Parliament.

In response to question a) in Mr. Dalyell's letter to you, the matter of constructing an austere communications facility in the Indian Ocean to service American and British ships and aircraft has been under consideration since 1963. The facility is designed to close a gap in our worldwide communications system. It is not in any sense a base in the conventional meaning of that word and will be manned by only a limited complement of 250 American and British personnel. We do not feel this activity would be incompatible with the Nixon Doctrine, nor can it be considered increasing "the engagement" of the U.S. abroad "at a time of disengagement". In a press release on December 15, 1970, a copy of which is attached, a full explanation concerning the construction of the Diego Garcia facility was provided to the public.

Concerning question b), we were aware that sentiment had been expressed by some states in the Indian Ocean area about precluding the region from being turned into an area for the military rivalry of great powers. It is

PM/ISO: JD Stoddart: cw

but safe underneath, is one half of a GBR business

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Clearances:
 AF/I - Lt Col. Critch
 NEA - Mr. Schiffe
 EUR/BMI - Mr. Burns
 OSD/ISA/FWRA - Mr. Barringer

Harrison M. Symmes
 Acting Assistant
 Secretary for Congressional
 Relations

Signed *[Signature]*

Sincerely,

I hope these responses have helped to clarify our reasons for proceeding to construct the Diego Garcia facility. If we can be of any further assistance on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

On question c), we have noted Mr. Dalyell's comment regarding the cost of the Diego Garcia facility and do not consider it to be valid. Congress provided initial funding for the project in the FY 71 Military Construction Program and the total cost of the facility may ultimately cost approximately \$19 million. Our military planners have made full and adequate allowance for the local geologic and climate conditions in developing the construction plans for the Diego Garcia facility.

certainly not the United States' desire to enter into such competition. What is in question here is simply responding to the need to provide communications services for American and British vessels and aircraft to assist them in transiting the open seas of the Indian Ocean. Before the decision to construct a facility on Diego Garcia was announced numerous governments in the region were consulted and their views taken into account. The Government of India was one of those approached.

Honorable John A. Blain
 House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Blain:

Thank you for your letter concerning the construction of the facility at Diego Garcia. We are currently reviewing the information you provided and will respond to you as soon as possible.