

34. Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs (Kitchen) to Secretary of State Rusk<sup>1</sup>

Washington, March 3, 1964.

SUBJECT

Discussions with the British on Indian Ocean Island Facilities

1. You approved on February 14 a memorandum outlining the area of discussions which Frank Sloan (DOD) and I expected to cover with British officials in London (Tab B).<sup>2</sup> The talks were held February 25-27 and centered on long range U.S. defense interests in the Indian Ocean area and on U.K. support for this American presence as complementary to their own.

2. Before departing London, we prepared a report which transmits an agreed U.S.-U.K. statement of the results of the discussions, a joint analysis of the political effect of such increased U.S. defense presence in the area, a British military appreciation of the potential for strategic development of Indian Ocean Islands under British sovereignty, and a summary of essential data on the islands. Pending arrival of the report, I summarize here the major impressions received and attach for your perusal the agreed statement of recommendations for future action (Tab A).<sup>2</sup>

a. It was clear that the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence were pleased at the U.S. initiative and that they wished to be as cooperative as feasible, having in mind their own interests. They noted they intend to remain in the area in force, and that our presence would complement theirs, rather than substitute for it.

b. British strategic concepts are similar to our own, in that they envisage development of islands as supplementing existing bases or

<sup>1</sup> Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 68 A 306, 381 UK, 6 March 1964. Secret. Drafted by Meyers and Kitchen. Copies were sent to Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs William R. Tyler, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Marshall Green, and Talbot. Sent through U. Alexis Johnson. Attached to a March 6 memorandum from Kitchen to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Regional Affairs Frank K. Sloan stating that the Secretary had approved the statement and recommendations that they and the British had developed jointly in London, which meant that the Department was prepared to move forward as rapidly as State and Defense jointly deemed it desirable to put into effect the recommendations that called for U.S. action. Kitchen said he hoped for a similarly affirmative reaction from Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

<sup>2</sup> Not attached to source text.

staging facilities on the Indian Ocean littoral, and as reinforcement in depth for mainland commitments. For example, they favor U.S. development of the Chagos Archipelago for a central ocean communications station and austere supporting facilities. The U.K. would like to share use of an oil storage depot and might share airfield facilities if their position in Gan became untenable.

The U.K. strongly favors development of an airfield on Aldabra (an uninhabited Crown island 500 miles off Tanganyika), which we would share, in order to anticipate inability to overfly Africa from Ascension Island, and to provide a staging area for actions in East Africa. (Similarly Aldabra would be useful to the USAF and CINC-STRIKE for operations either from Ascension or through Turkey and Iran.)

They, as we, could usefully employ facilities in the Cocos/Keeling Islands in conjunction with the Australians thus, with Diego Garcia and Aldabra, creating a strategic triangle.

They understand we envisage development of austere air and harbor facilities over a long term, and that except for a communications station on Diego Garcia, firm decisions as to the future have yet to be made in the USG.

c. Colonial Office representatives, while sympathetic to U.S. interests tried unsuccessfully to obtain some indications the U.S. could help with aid programs or by large employment operations to benefit local economies. We made clear we preferred exclusive control, preferably without employing local inhabitants, in islands where we might install facilities, while of course being willing to share these facilities with the U.K. As you will note in the summary of agreed recommendations at Tab A, the U.K. delegation agreed that the U.K. should be responsible for acquiring land, resettling the population and compensating them therefor, at HMG's expense, while the U.S. would be responsible for construction and maintenance costs.

d. With regard to our present and funded requirement for a communication station, it was agreed a joint survey of Diego Garcia should take place quickly, the timing being dependent on British decisions when and how to transfer the administration of Diego Garcia from Mauritius. Here, despite Colonial Office reservations and desire to consult local authorities, the Foreign Office clearly indicated that control over the Chagos Archipelago (including Diego Garcia) should be transferred in such way as to minimize substantially or remove the possibility that use of the islands could be hampered by external pressures for self-determination.

e. Incident to the central negotiation, the British accepted the U.S. draft on terms of operation for the U.S. satellite tracking station in the Seychelles.

3. If you approve the statement and recommendations regarding U.S. actions contained at Tab A, I will take the necessary steps to proceed with DOD to move forward as recommended, in concert with all concerned agencies and departments.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Approved by Rusk on March 5.