

# AIRGRAM

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FILE DESIGNATION

CA-13965

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SERIES B

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : ADDIS ABABA, BANGKOK FOR US COUNCIL REP, BLANTYRE, COLOMBO, DAR-ES-SALAAM, JIDDA, KAMPALA, KARACHI, KUALA LUMPUR, LUSAKA, NAIROBI, NEW DELHI, PARIS FOR USRO, TANANARIVE, TEHRAN. INFO: BANGKOK FOR EMBASSY, CANBERRA, CAPETOWN, DJAKARTA, MANILA, OTTAWA, MOGADISCIO, LONDON, USUN, WELLINGTON, PARIS FOR EMBASSY, BURNS & JAMES, CINCSTRIKE FOR POLAD, CINCLANT FOR POLAD, CINCPCAC FOR POLAD

FROM : Department of State

DATE: JUN 25 2 54 PM '65

SUBJECT : Indian Ocean Islands

REF : JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLI/RAC 00-338

By SJ NARA, Date 3-13-03

1. Addressee posts are generally aware that the US and UK have been discussing measures to keep potentially useful islands in the Indian Ocean area available for defense purposes. The underlying concept is to assure that certain islands which have emergency utility now, or a development potential for possible future defense requirements (communications, space-tracking, prestockage, staging, etc.), will not be lost from Western control through constitutional changes such as independence for the colonies involved. While US took initiative in raising concept with UK, we have no intention of assuming British responsibilities in the Indian Ocean area and the discussions have been premised on the understanding that Great Britain will continue to discharge its responsibilities.

2. At present the US is planning to develop a communications relay station and austere supporting facilities, including airstrip, on Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago (about 1000 miles southwest of the Indian Subcontinent and under Mauritius jurisdiction). The British have expressed interest in the development of air staging facilities on Aldabra (275 miles northwest of Madagascar, and under Seychelles jurisdiction) and the US would be interested in having the right to use such facilities. Farquhar and Des Roches (respectively about 150 and 400 miles northeast of Madagascar,

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FORM 4-63 DS-323

Drafted by:

G/PM:HMeYers:cc:ras

Drafting Date:

6/24/65

Contents and Classification Approved by:

G/PM - Jeffrey C. Kitchen

XXXXXXXXXXXX

AFE - Mr. Oulashin

UNP - Miss Brown

FE - Mr. Manhard

OSD/ISA - Mr. Bronez

BNA - Mr. Judd

SOA - Mr. Cameron

NEA - Mr. Davies

OSD/PA - Col. McClelland

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and under Seychelles jurisdiction) are considered to have possible future value, although there are no US or UK facilities planned for them at this time. The US and UK are also interested in the right to use airfield facilities existing and being developed by Australia on Cocos/Keeling (500 miles south of Sumatra). This combination of facilities and rights (Aldabra, Chagos, and Cocos) would afford access to the Indian Ocean from either the Pacific or Atlantic (recognizing latter approach normally requires overflight of southern Africa pending the availability of longer range aircraft).

3. The UK states it is now prepared in principle to take the steps leading to constitutional detachment of the Chagos Archipelago, Aldabra, Farquhar, and des Roches from the colonies concerned. These islands would be administered by London, rather than by local administrations as at present. As facilities may be constructed, the intent would be to resettle the small number of native occupants, and thus to minimize potential future agitation regarding the use of these islands. While the UK has taken in principle the decision to go ahead with this effort, actual detachment will depend upon the ability to secure adequate agreement on the part of local administrations in Mauritius and the Seychelles.

4. Following are copies of the two messages which will be sent (with minor modifications, such as deleting references to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers meetings, which have now occurred) to the British posts noted in each message, and which describe in detail the actions intended, the explanations to be made, and the public affairs guidance to be used. These messages have been agreed between the US and the UK. Both messages are directed to British High Commissioners in Commonwealth countries. The first (Message A) contains background information; the second (Message B) contains the instructions on action to be taken. These messages will also be sent to British Embassies in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Jidda, Paris, Tananarive, Tehran and UKUN. It is presently anticipated British representatives will be instructed to carry out their instructions during week of July 5. Precise date will be confirmed telegraphically.

Message A~~SECRET~~

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MESSAGE A

1. Following consideration by Ministers here, Americans have now been informed that, subject to the agreement of the two Governments which we regard as essential, we would in principle be prepared to detach from Mauritius and Seychelles now, in order to hold available for our own and American defense use, the following islands:

The Chagos Archipelago (including Diego  
Garcia) from Mauritius  
Aldabra  
Farquhar and  
des Roches from Seychelles

(Brief notes on these islands are being telegraphed separately.) Whilst no final decision to proceed has yet been taken, basic intention is that Britain should be responsible for cost of acquisition of necessary islands and compensation generally. Americans would finance construction costs of defense facilities they require, sharing use with the UK.

2. Americans have expressed continued interest in proceeding on foregoing basis. They and we believe, however, that in presentations to Mauritius and Seychelles Governments the American role should be played down as much as possible.

3. Besides compensation for island owners and cost of re-settlement of labor, in order to secure acceptance of these proposals in Mauritius and Seychelles it may be necessary to offer further compensation including special grants for capital development to Mauritius and Seychelles, and perhaps other inducements also.

4. Because these costs are likely to be appreciable, Americans have been approached on question of a financial contribution towards them. There has not yet been a definitive US reaction on this point. (Note: This was written before US decision noted in para 5, following end of Message B.)

5. Ministers

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5. Ministers have directed that discussions should now be initiated with Mauritius and Seychelles Governments, the object of which will be to secure their reactions to the proposals, and to establish quantum of likely compensation required. No final decision will be taken until outcome of these discussions is known.

6. Mauritius and Seychelles will be told that as regards Diego Garcia there is a firm requirement for the establishment of a radio communications station and supporting facilities including an airstrip; work on permanent facilities would not start before next year, although interim temporary facilities might start operating earlier. As regards remainder of the islands (including remainder of Chagos Archipelago) the requirement is in the nature of insurance for the future; no firm plans exist for early defense developments on them but it is possible that various facilities may be required in future years. It would be necessary to resettle the labor force (altogether some 500 souls) now associated with the coconut plantation on Diego Garcia, but no other movement of population would be necessary on any of the other islands in advance of a decision in each case to develop defense facilities there.

7. Mauritius and Seychelles will be told that Her Majesty's Government does not wish them to incur any expense or loss as a result of the operation.

8. Governors will also be authorized, if they judge it useful, to stress the importance which we attach to these developments in context of future security in Indian Ocean area. We hope that the proposals will be welcomed in Mauritius and the Seychelles.

9. It will be made clear to the two Governments that it is the intention that the islands in question should be constitutionally separated from Mauritius and Seychelles and established by Order in Council as a separate British administration. The Americans would not be prepared to go ahead on any other basis.

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10. In putting matter to Mauritian ministers and Seychelles Executive Council, Governors will emphasize strictly confidential nature of proposals and stress that at this stage they should give no publicity to any part of them, or discuss them with anyone except among themselves. Nevertheless we must face possibility that details of the proposals, some of which have already leaked to the world press, will become public at any time after Mauritians and Seychellois are approached. We should therefore inform at least those Commonwealth Governments which have a direct interest in these developments about them at this stage.

11. My immediately following telegram contains instructions on parallel confidential approaches to Commonwealth Governments which are therefore now required.

12. Americans are aware of these instructions, and have agreed that we should take lead in informing Commonwealth Governments. Their ambassadors will be instructed to concert with our posts whether and how they should support our approach in the light of local circumstances. You should therefore contact your American colleagues before taking action.

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MESSAGE B

1. My immediately preceding telegram:

Following are instructions for approaches to Commonwealth Governments.

2. Canberra, Wellington, Ottawa can take old Commonwealth countries fully into our confidence. (Australian and Canadian High Commissioners here have already been kept generally informed.) They will of course appreciate the potential strategic importance of the proposed arrangements. You may inform them of the lines of our approach to other

Commonwealth

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- 6 -

Commonwealth countries set out in the following paragraphs. We hope that we may rely on their support if the going gets rough, e.g. if there is noisy criticism in the United Nations, or in the Prime Ministers' Meeting.

3. Delhi, Karachi, Colombo, Kuala Lumpur, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, Kampala, Zomba, Lusaka should inform Commonwealth Governments, drawing on paragraphs 1, and 4-8 of my immediately preceding telegram. In doing so you should aim to treat the whole subject in low key, playing down the American role and any special significance of the proposals. The impression to convey is that you are merely passing on advance information on a subject of mutual interest in accordance with routine Commonwealth practice.

4. You should stress that the discussions with Mauritian Ministers and the Seychelles Executive Council are confidential, but it is obviously right that Commonwealth Governments should be aware of the present position. No final decision will be taken until discussions with Mauritians and Seychellois are complete.

5. Once the approach is made it will be difficult to deny further leaks. There is then likely to be strong criticism in Afro/Asian and communist circles, which may be reflected in Prime Ministers' Meeting. We shall have to face this. Object of your approach is to preempt and so try to minimize this criticism in Governmental circles. You can judge best what arguments are most likely to achieve this result locally, and at what level your approach is likely to be most profitable. Following points may be useful and may be deployed at your discretion:

(a) From the British and Commonwealth point of view we believe these arrangements will strengthen the bridge across the Indian Ocean and ultimately make it easier for us to meet our commitments to our other Commonwealth partners (e.g. Malaysia) as well as to the defense of the free world generally.

(b)

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(b) Britain will retain full sovereignty over islands listed in my immediately preceding telegram.

(c) We are taking great care to see that the interests of the local inhabitants are protected, in close consultation with the Governments of Mauritius and the Seychelles. In any case the islands are small, isolated and thinly populated (only a few hundred contract laborers and their families).

(d) There is no need to read more into the proposals than meets the eye. The only developments at present planned are the establishment of a radio communications relay station and associated support facilities at Diego Garcia. You may stress the limited scope and purpose of these facilities -- more limited than some recent press stories have suggested. You should of course carefully avoid any use of the word "base" in relation to our proposals: it is in any case a misleading and inaccurate term in this context.

(e) The argument that we would be better able to go to the aid of our friends in case of need can however easily be misunderstood or misrepresented, particularly in Africa, and posts should use it with caution.

(f) You may well be asked whether there are any nuclear implications in these proposals. If so, as always in reply to questions of this kind, you must explain that it is an invariable rule, observed both by the Americans and by ourselves, that we never confirm or deny the presence or potential presence of nuclear weapons in any place. However see (d) above.

(g) If

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(g) If asked you should deny that the development of island facilities is, or could be, a substitute for Aden and Singapore.

6. In the case of Delhi, we would hope that responsible Indians at least privately would regard these arrangements in the Indian Ocean as a useful contribution to stability in the area and ultimately as a source of reassurance for themselves. We recognize that their anxiety to remain on good terms with the Afro/Asians may make it impossible for them to come out with open support for the project and that they may have to pay lip service to the views of our critics, but we hope that for all practical purposes they will mute their public criticism and that we may count on their acquiescence.

7. In the case of Karachi, despite Bhutto's recent remarks we would hope that the Pakistanis would appreciate the practical contribution which any such facilities would make to our ability to fulfill our SEATO obligations. We recognize that they are unlikely to be enthusiastic about the proposals, however, but, as in the case of the Indians, we hope that they would not feel it necessary to pay more than lip service to the views of our critics.

8. In the case of Colombo, we appreciate that you may be embarrassed by the nature of the answer which you must give if you are questioned on the nuclear implications of these proposals, but you should do everything possible to play down the scope and purpose of the project generally. Senanayake's private approach to you just before the election suggests that in private at least he may not be too unsympathetic, and we would hope that he would be prepared at least to moderate any public criticism.

9. Kuala Lumpur may wish to stress the importance of the facilities as a useful potential addition to our options for reinforcing the Far East, in particular to help Malaysia. We would hope that the Malaysians would agree that these arrangements will contribute to stability in the area and that they would welcome the project generally.

10. Recent

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10. Recent events entitle us, we think, to expect some measure of understanding and acquiescence, even if the Kenyans, in order to keep in with the Afro/Asians, cannot openly support our proposal.

11. In the case of Dar-es-Salaam we recognize that the proposals are bound to arouse hostile criticism from members of Tanzanian Government. We are prepared to face this, but in order to minimize it you should particularly stress points in paragraphs 5(b), 5(d) above. Tanzanians may be particularly alarmed at inclusion of Aldabra in the project. Answer to this may be to emphasize that no firm plans yet exist for developments there. In any case the most likely use for the island would only be to strengthen our strategic communications across the Indian Ocean to Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand.

12. Kampala should inform Ugandans because they are certain to hear about proposals from Kenyans or Tanzanians.

13. Zomba and Lusaka should inform Malawi/Zambia Governments because we would hope that their reactions would be less hostile than those of East Africans.

14. In case of all other addressees we leave it to your discretion whether you should make an approach to your Commonwealth Government. You may use this telegram as guidance in order to reply to questions from official sources, or from press after details have leaked and been confirmed officially in London. If you are asked questions by press before such official confirmation you must maintain line indicated in agreed guidance to effect:

a. The UK has considered with the US the possibility of establishing various facilities in the Indian Ocean area in order to assist both countries in fulfilling their commitments.

b. A joint survey of various islands was conducted in July 1964 with these possibilities in mind.

c. This survey was carried out after consulting principal local political leaders, whom the UK has also consulted about future steps.

d. What

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d. What is contemplated is establishment of a communications relay station and austere supporting facilities.

e. The interests of the inhabitants (if any) of the islands will be fully safeguarded.

f. These matters are still under discussion and no final decisions have yet been made. The UK has not yet determined what arrangements will be needed regarding the islands on which facilities may be established, but is in the process of consulting local interests.

15. You should ask your Commonwealth Government to assure that their UN delegation is advised of their government's position, in order to minimize the possibility that the UN delegations might cause difficulties if questions are raised in a UN forum regarding the Indian Ocean Islands.

16. Please report any local reactions to your approach, or stories in local press on this question.

(END MESSAGE B)

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5. FYI. It should be noted that the foregoing messages are drafted to play down the extent of US involvement in the detachment proposal, and to avoid any impression that US development of substantial military facilities is contemplated. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, we have also made clear to the British that US interest in the islands for current and possible future use is not based on any intention to assume British responsibilities in the Indian Ocean area, but on the contrary is premised on the understanding that the UK will continue to discharge those responsibilities. We have decided in principle to make a contribution toward the detachment costs, described in Message A above; we would want the fact of such a contribution having been made to be very closely held in both governments. END FYI.

6. British

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6. British representatives will take the lead in approaching the Governments at Canberra, Ottawa, Wellington, New Delhi, Karachi, Colombo, Kuala Lumpur, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, Kampala, Blantyre, Lusaka, Cape Town and at NATO and SEATO. The American representatives at these posts should cooperate with their British colleagues, as found appropriate, but with the understanding that the Department believes it advisable to make any American presentation only supplementary to the British approach. USUN should be guided by the foregoing. The approach to be made is indicated in Message B above, and can be adapted as you see fit to the circumstances at your post. Supporting statements by US representatives in the NATO Political Adviser's Committee and SEATO are desired, and US REPS should agree with their British colleagues on the nature of these statements, within the terms of the preceding information.

7. Embassies Tehran, Addis Ababa, Jidda and Tananarive should approach the governments to which accredited, employing the same kind of argumentation suggested in the preceding paragraph, equally adapted to the local circumstances. Please coordinate your approach with your British colleagues.

8. You are requested to report local reactions by telegraph.

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