



EMBASSY  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

London, W. 1.

February 10, 1965

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Dear Geoffrey:

In our meeting on January 26 you requested urgent answers, even on a partial or tentative basis, to a number of specific questions regarding proposed facilities in the Indian Ocean islands.

I have now been authorized to provide you the following responses, keyed to corresponding sections of your letter:

(a) The Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia

We would not regard the detachment of the entire Chagos Archipelago as essential, but consider it highly desirable. It appears to us that full detachment now might more effectively assure that Mauritian political attention, including any recovery pressure, is diverted from Diego Garcia over the long run. In addition, as indicated in my letter of January 14, full detachment is useful from the military security standpoint, and provides a source for additional land areas should requirements arise which could not be met on Diego Garcia.

(b) Aldabra

Our interest in Aldabra arises in large part from the strong interest initially expressed by the U.K. in the development of an air staging base there, and our conclusion that there is an increasing need for dependable long-term accesses to Africa south of the Sahara. We have no immediate requirement for other facilities on Aldabra, and cannot predict when we will be in a position to fund for the concerted development of the air staging base itself. The requirements for a communication station at Diego Garcia antedates specific interest in Aldabra and, although staging facilities if constructed at these sites would be mutually supporting, the initial mission at Diego Garcia does not depend upon any development at Aldabra.

Geoffrey G. Arthur, Esquire,  
Head, Permanent Under-Secretary's Department,  
Foreign Office.

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(c) Remaining Islands

(i) The priority order is based on the topographic and hydrographic data gathered in last summer's joint surveys, and the geographical position of the islands.

(ii) Taking the islands as a group, we consider them to have potential usefulness for airstrips, anchorages, Pol supply points, pre-positioning of materiel, and support of space programs. We have not identified particular objectives for individual locations, except in the sense of concluding that certain facilities would be excluded by physical characteristics such as space limitations or poor anchorage.

(iii) We do not have any schedule for facilities at these locations. This would depend upon the development of future military requirements.

(d) General

From our standpoint there would be no reason to relocate population prior to an island's coming into use to meet a requirement. This would apply to the other islands of the Chag Archipelago so long as our activity was confined to Diego Garcia.

(e) Local Labor

We do not in principle exclude the use of local labor for construction work. As you will recognize, in practice the extent to which local labor can be used depends upon such factors as availability of appropriate skills, possible balance of payments considerations, and the value to the contractor of key personnel from his own staff.

I hope that this information will provide you sufficient basis for requisite political decisions within Her Majesty's Government, and with the governments concerned. Please let us know if you need anything further.

Sincerely,

  
George S. Newman

Counselor for Politico-Military Affairs