

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

July 25, 1975

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EXECUTIVE

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Dear John:

The Senate will soon debate S. Res. 160 which would disapprove construction projects on the Island of Diego Garcia. I would greatly appreciate your support in defeating this resolution.

The modest program proposed there is essential to support United States forces when they operate in the Indian Ocean. These additional facilities will provide a degree of independence and flexibility that is simply not possible when the nearest United States support bases are in the Pacific, some 4,000 miles away.

The interest of the United States in the stability and security of the Indian Ocean region is considerable and growing. We and our allies have a particular interest in the sea lanes along which oil is shipped from the Persian Gulf. In this regard, we must be able to monitor the growing Soviet presence in the area, particularly in view of the reopening of the Suez Canal and the recent expansion of Soviet naval support facilities in Somalia. We must also be able to deploy forces to the Indian Ocean to underline the increased strategic importance of this region, and to emphasize our traditional concern for the freedom of the seas.

Aside from the three ships in the Middle East Force, we maintain no permanent military deployments in the region, and even the dispatch of units from the Pacific has been infrequent and of limited duration. At present, we have no plans to expand our naval activities in the Indian Ocean. In proposing additional support facilities on Diego Garcia, we do not intend to station combat units there on a permanent basis; nor do we imply an increase in the level of United States forces deployed to the region.

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I share the desires of those who wish to avoid an arms race in the Indian Ocean; such a development would serve the interests of no nation. To avoid that prospect, we will continue to exercise the utmost restraint in our own activities. There is no reason to believe this proposed construction program would impede consideration of possible arms limitations in the area. Rather, this modest expansion would contribute to the perceived balance of forces in the area -- an essential condition to any successful arms control agreement.

To summarize, the construction of additional support facilities at Diego Garcia will enable us to operate existing forces flexibly in the Indian Ocean and to meet more effectively any contingency which may arise there in the future. Our capabilities in that area of the world represent a threat to no nation; and what little we do have, used with prudence and restraint, will contribute to the peace and stability of the area.

I hope that I can count on your personal support in opposing S. Res. 160.

Sincerely,



The Honorable John C. Stennis  
Chairman, Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

July 24, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*  
SUBJECT: Letter to Senator Stennis Regarding  
Diego Garcia

On Monday, July 28, the Senate will vote on a resolution to disapprove the proposed expansion of naval facilities on Diego Garcia. Senator Stennis, who has strongly supported the Administration on this issue, has requested a letter from you before your departure for Europe asking for his support for the defeat of the resolution. There is little doubt that the resolution will fail, but a letter to Stennis will be a useful gesture of appreciation for his support on this issue.

The letter at Tab A informs the Senator of the need for the modest expansion of these support facilities to enhance the flexibility and independence of our forces in the area. It indicates the U. S. interest in the stability and security of the region and the need to be able to extend our watch over increased Soviet presence there. It also gives your assurances that there are no plans to expand our naval activities in the Indian Ocean or station combat troops on the island on a permanent basis and that the proposed construction program would not impede our consideration of possible arms limitation in the region.

The text of the letter has been cleared with Paul Theis' office. Max Friedersdorf concurs.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the letter to Senator Stennis.

*Signed 7/25/75*

*Original was given to Max Friedersdorf on 7/25/75 for personal delivery.  
He was returned to H.A. for their request on 7/25/75.*