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October 17, 1963

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Our Indian Ocean exercise is moving ahead. Rusk is sending a strong (I helped beef up) reply to atrocious Gilpatric 2 October letter, stressing politico-military value of carrier task force. It accepts DOD offer of 2-4 months a year ad interim, but goes on to urge a carrier be deployed at least eight months out of twelve. So we're keeping ball in play.

Need for some more reassuring words to Paks when Taylor/McN. go out is also a plus factor. Since DOD has already offered intermittent deployment, doesn't this permit their mentioning to Paks that we'll be deploying a task force though perhaps not full-time for a while.

Incidentally, the draft (6 Sept.) SecDef memo for the President, which calls for maintaining 15 carrier level through FY 1969, contains many arguments which would justify Indian Ocean project. Unfortunately, the draft deals with everything else but the rationale for where to deploy the 15 carriers. Nonetheless:

1. Costs (pp. 9-10). These are very crudely estimated at \$300 million annually for each carrier and associated air group, escorts, etc. But one cannot blithely accept this figure as the new out-of-pocket cost of putting a one carrier force in the Indian Ocean, because: (a) it includes amortization of capital outlay for the carrier, planes, associated air group, which costs have already been incurred; (b) Indian Ocean force might well need fewer escorts, less high performance aircraft etc. because of reduced air/sea threat and chiefly conventional mission.

2. Theater vs. CONUS-based tactical air (pp. 11-12). The case for theater-based air looks better in Indian Ocean than almost anywhere else, simply because this is the theater farthest from CONUS. So here theater-based forces are most needed to (a) improve probability of getting strategic warning; and (b) furnish temporary protection for deployment of CONUS-based forces.

3. Carrier Air vs. Land-based Air (CASF). Precisely those missions described as "efficient employment" of carrier air look best in Indian Ocean: (1) providing local air superiority to cover arrival of CASF (which gets out to IO area later than to WE or FE); (2) providing tactical air power where land bases are not immediately available. We have no US land bases in IO area. To buy some could be very expensive. There are allied air bases, but presumably any aggressor would strike these first (e.g. in Iran) unless they were protected. So in IO a combination of initial sea-based airpower, rapidly supplemented

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by land-based CASF looks like best bet, and I am confident that the analyses of possible contingencies DOD proposes to undertake will confirm this quick judgment.

4. Increasing Mobility of Land-based Tactical Air: This factor is least persuasive with respect to IO area: (1) it is farthest from CONUS; (2) it has no US bases; (3) while more airfields are becoming available en route to the area, there are complex problems of getting timely overflight and landing rights; (4) airfields in the area might not be available prior to D-day for political reasons; (5) acquiring US bases would be expensive, aside from the political problems involved.

5. Vulnerability of Carriers. Least in IO area. Chicoms have only limited air capability against carriers in IO. Indonesian or UAR capabilities, even with Soviet-supplied weapons would be degraded. Soviet or Chicom subs would have a long haul to operate in IO. Only serious threat I can envisage would be Soviet long-range air operations in event of an attack on Iran.

6. Assumed deployment of even 13 carrier force (pp 36-37) would allow for one carrier in Indian Ocean. From Atlantic-based forces it would allow one carrier full-time in Mediterranean, and an additional carrier four months out of the year for overseas deployment in such areas as the Arabian Sea. From Pacific-based forces three carriers could be deployed continuously in the Western Pacific or two there and one in the Bay of Bengal. Presumably with 15 carriers we could keep two carriers deployed almost full time in the IO area.

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I would summarize the case for at least one carrier continuously in the Indian Ocean as follows:

A. While of lower strategic priority than the Europe/Mediterranean or Pacific areas, it is the only one where we now have almost no theater forces.

B. From a purely political viewpoint, as well as that of deterrence, we need some visible multi-purpose US power in the area. The list of possible contingencies for which it would be useful is long (Arab-Israel, Arabian Peninsula, Somali-Ethiopia, Persian Gulf oil, Iraq/Iran, USSR/Iran, Pak/Indian, Sino-Indian, Chicom/Burma, SEA, Malaysia/Indonesia)

C. From a military viewpoint the highest priority initial requirement in such contingencies would be tactical air, in support of indigenous local forces.

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D. Because of the sheer distance of this area from CONUS, the lack of US bases in the area and the political complications of getting them, this initial requirement can best be met by carrier-based air. It would inter alia provide cover for the supplementary deployment of land-based air as needed.

E. In considering the relative cost/effectiveness of carrier vs. land-based US airpower to meet this initial requirement, we must include the cost of acquiring land bases, adequately protecting them against initial strikes, the continuing rental (direct and indirect) involved, and possible restrictions on employment of land-based air.

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