

Don Pels / Komer

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Mac -

July 18, 1964

Making News on Indian Ocean. There's some real mileage here, which would also help counter Goldwater thesis we're weakening nation's defenses. That we're moving toward a permanently deployed carrier task force as "Lyndon Johnson's reserve for peace in the Indian Ocean area" could be parlayed into a good story (with even a plug for why fewer shore-based F-104's in hands of our MAP clients are needed).

Don Pels

Pegs on which to hang story are: (1) LBJ approval of Round-the-World Cruise itinerary--McNamara's proposed itinerary now here; (2) release of news about Indian Ocean base search (we'd want to clear with UK).

Opp. of secrecy; request to look/review for Don Pels

Weeks ago CINCLANT released news there'd be a round-the-world cruise of nuclear-powered task force, but it was so low key that DOD tells me it got no play except in service press. So this is still fresh. As to base hunt, Al Friendly has been good about holding up story, so we could tell him that in return we'll let him have much bigger story (we'd also want to give to Hightower et al to get national coverage). Technique could be LBJ press conference reference, beefed up by suitable backgrounding.

As justification reason

I can spin a fairly convincing tale on all this: (1) growing US concern over threats in Indian Ocean area, citing Chicom attack on India, Zanzibar, implicitly Indonesia); (2) at same time UK--which traditionally represented Western power this area--playing lesser role; (3) LBJ's determination to help plug this gap; (4) vast arc from Suez to Singapore ideal area for mobile carrier air power, not tied to politically vulnerable land bases but packing quite a conventional punch; (5) so US quietly deploying carriers there intermittently to reassure our friends; (6) wide range of purposes served; (7) US/UK looking for out-of-way island bases and commo facilities; (8) other steps under consideration, e.g. pre-stockage; (9) our area friends can't say publicly they like this, but they do.

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This type of muscle-flexing may generate some adverse comment in area (Indos, UAR, Ceylonese, some Africans), but I'd hazard it's supportable.

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13292, Sec. 3.4
NSC Memo, 1/30/95, State Guidelines
By jcfw NARA, Date 5-25-04

R. W. Komer

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