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Indian Ocean

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An Indian Ocean Force

The establishment of a Concord Squadron for frequent deployment in the Indian Ocean might well be a logical step, in the event it is determined on the basis of current studies that the US should assume a strengthened role in support of the UK in the East of Suez area. While there are other alternatives to increasing the US military presence in this area, the lack of US bases, difficulties as to staging and overflight rights and various other existing political limitations would suggest the use of sea power at this time. The Concord Squadron as a continuing force would fulfill the important politico-military purposes for which it was originally established and can now only be intermittently deployed, because of the over commitment of our naval forces. While there are various alternative approaches to making a carrier and related forces for a permanent Concord Squadron available, the following concept is one designed to minimize costs to the US and believed to have important political advantages.

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E.O. 13292, Sec. 3.5

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By 12, NARA, Date 12-1-05General~~SECRET~~

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General Concept: Instead of a US Concord Squadron, this concept envisages a bi-national force made up of both US and Australian naval units. The US would provide an aircraft carrier, a US HANCOCK class carrier, otherwise mothballed or scheduled for decommissioning. Alternatively the use of a CVA currently redesignated and performing a CVS mission might be considered. Australia would provide two escort destroyers and a supporting oiler. The carrier would be homeported in West Australia, possibly at Fremantle, along with the Australian units of the squadron. This naval force would have multiple missions, paralleling those now established for the US Concord Squadron. They would include: providing a deterrent to external threats facing various countries of the area; projecting a stabilizing influence for countries e.g. those of East Africa, beset with internal problems caused by inherent social and political instability as well as increasing communist penetration; providing a visible and credible US military presence to Middle Eastern countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, concerned at potential threats from the UAR and USSR; providing a reassuring, meaningful presence as regards a ChiCom nuclear threat;

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threat; and finally projecting a constraining influence on the continuing friction and dispute between India and Pakistan.

In view of these varied missions the carrier would not be an attack carrier, or CVA, in the normal definition. It might best be described as a multi-purpose carrier, possibly with a descriptive designation of CVM. Its air group make-up might include two dual capable attack squadrons, one US and one Australian; one or two defensive fighter-interceptor squadrons; one or two augmented troop helo squadrons and suitable utility aircraft. Also embarked would be a reinforced company of Marines with supporting arms and equipment, transportable by helicopter.

Except for the one Australian attack squadron the carrier would be entirely US manned. The destroyers and oiler would be wholly Australian manned. The squadron would be commanded by a US Flag Officer with a small bi-national, US and Australian staff.

Operational Concept: With such a force continuously available frequent cruises could be made visiting various countries around the perimeter of the Indian Ocean. While

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its normal image would be one of reassurance and goodwill, the Concord Squadron would be capable of special missions of politico-military importance. These might include: standing off the East Coast of Africa, in situations comparable to the Congo, and evacuating personnel as necessary with the carrier's large troop helicopters; providing support to a government which so requested, in the same manner as the HMS CENTAUR assisted Tanzania during its army rebellion in 1963; seizing and holding an air field for projecting US land-based air into the area, under various exigencies; and finally, quietly exploiting its capability for underway visits and making demonstration of its flexible strength to heads of state such as Kenyatta, Haile Selassie, Faisal, and the Shah of Iran. Its nuclear retaliatory capability could be flexibly played either in low key or high key or not at all, as the situation might demand.

As an example such a squadron could leave Fremantle and proceed on a routine deployment including 3-day port visits at Tamatave, Malagasy Republic; Mombasa, Kenya; Aden; Karachi, Pakistan; and Bombay, India. Underway visits to other

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countries, could be included in such an itinerary so as not to appreciably extend the cruise time involved. Such a cruise could be accomplished in about 40 days at an economical speed of 17 knots. This would mean that about four or five such cruises could be conducted each year with varied itineraries as the politico-military situation might indicate.

Cost Implications: The cost of carrying out the concept of a US-Australian Concord Squadron could be minimized in various ways. First of all the attack aircraft assigned, and which would be perfectly adequate for the mission, could be obsolescing aircraft due for phasing out of US Navy inventory, such as the A-4 SKYHAWK. Similarly, other aircraft to be included need not be new, high performance models but could come from existing stocks due for replacement. Again, the cost of the carrier which might otherwise be "mothballed" would be limited to any necessary overhaul -- plus the continuing operational costs including personnel, current ship maintenance, and fuel. The Australian destroyers to be assigned would come from existing forces, which soon will be supplemented by three guided missile destroyers currently building in the US. Similarly, the oiler might be available

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available from existing Australian forces. Other than the oiler, currently available 7th Fleet underway replenishment forces could be utilized for the US carrier at planned rendezvous in the Malacca Straits or South China Sea areas, incidental to each Concord Squadron scheduled cruise. Logistic support involving stores, food and ammunition for the Australian units would logically come from existing Australian Navy shore support activities.

Homeporting: A major argument for homeporting the US carrier in Australia would be to reduce costs by not requiring a "back-up" carrier or carriers to provide for rotation. In addition, the permanent nature of the bi-national force and the special multi-purpose configuration of this carrier would indicate the assignment of a special ship for this mission. Such a carrier probably could be maintained on an austere basis -- almost continuously operational -- by the use of short, periodic overhauls in an Australian shipyard. If after three or four years it might be necessary for the carrier to undergo a major overhaul in the United States, arrangements might be worked out

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whereby she could be relieved by a Pacific Fleet carrier, on a temporary basis.

Other arguments for the homeporting of the carrier in Australia would be political and psychological as well as practical. The utilization of one US carrier with which Australian naval forces could identify and associate such arrangements would have various advantages. The relative permanency of the US carrier crew with whom the Australian Navy would work in Concord operations would permit the development of close personal relationships, mutual understanding and more efficient, professional operations. The ideal living conditions and lack of language difference in Australia, as the homeport, would make recruitment of US naval personnel for such an overseas assignment relatively easy. An enthusiastic response might well be expected.

Cost-Sharing: Under the bi-national concept proposed for the Concord Squadron, cost-sharing would be inherent. The US would be responsible for costs related to the carrier. Australia, which would support the costs of her naval units provided to the Concord Squadron, might be able to provide

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some compensating assistance with regard to US expenditures related to the gold flow problem i.e. those incurred by ship personnel and their dependents living in Australia and overhaul costs of the carrier. It would seem reasonable that the Australian government, if it should desire to accept the proposed arrangements under this concept, would be willing to provide for "offset" purchases in the US to compensate as might be necessary. Actually, Australia is currently purchasing major military equipment in the US and continuing purchases could provide the necessary compensation.

Political Implications: In any examination of an expanded US military role, in collaboration with the UK, in the Indian Ocean area it is recognized that US and UK interests are generally consistent and, for most purposes, mutually supporting throughout the area. On the other hand, US and Australian interests, primarily based on overall stability of the area and the prevention of communist encroachment would appear to be as or even more consistent.

Under the ANZUS treaty the United States has certain obligations in support of Australia and New Zealand. Within the terms of this mutual defense agreement, it would seem

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that establishment of a bi-national force, such as the proposed US-Australian Concord Squadron, would give real and substantive meaning to the Treaty. At relatively modest cost to both countries a "force in being" could be created which would be responsive to the national interests of both countries. While New Zealand's interests are not so directly concerned with the Indian Ocean area and her resources quite limited, her participation would be welcomed if she should so desire.

One of the problems associated with a visibly expanded US/UK role in the area is the questionable international reaction to such a development. Other NATO countries might well read this as another example of the "special relationship", as a diversion of UK and US military resources from the threat posed at Western Europe and a shifting in the focus of political as well as military interest of both the UK and the US to the Asian area. Similarly, within Asia there would be varying reactions to an expanded US military posture in the Indian Ocean in close, visible collaboration with the UK. The mere increase in the US military presence, regardless of its association with the existing

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existing UK forces, would be questioned by some countries on the basis that it was uninvited US intervention.

On the other hand, if this increased presence were to be in association with and under a defense agreement with an indigenous country, such as Australia, such accusations might well not eventuate. Certainly if they did they could be rebutted. Under the concept proposed, the US-Australian Concord Squadron could be pictured as a logical implementation of the ANZUS Treaty, a defensive agreement in effect for many years.

On this basis, such an association with Australia could have a catalytic effect on any criticism of the United States from within or without the area. While any US and UK military operations in the area certainly would need to be coordinated and we would of course collaborate in every sense, this could be done on a relatively private basis since such collaboration would primarily involve naval forces. Visibility could reasonably be controlled. On the other hand the Concord Squadron of Australian and US naval units would be continuously visible, demonstrating what would appear to be

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a new relationship with Australia that would publicly overshadow and de-emphasize the UK-US relationship.

On balance it would appear that there might be clear advantages from a US viewpoint to establishing a US-Australian Concord Squadron in the Indian Ocean. There is good reason to believe that the Australian government would be most receptive to and welcome such a proposal. While the UK might have certain reservations, the advantages to their world position in the overall perspective might be recognized.

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