

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Dear John:

Knowing of your personal concern for the adequacy of our defense posture, I am writing to express my views on the necessity of going forward with a modest expansion of the naval support facility on Diego Garcia.

The strategic importance of the Indian Ocean is, I believe, clear. Not only is it an important crossroads of maritime activity, but it is, as well, key to our ability to demonstrate our support for allies in the region and to protect U.S. interests there. As you know, we have maintained a military presence in the Indian Ocean for more than twenty years. In recent times, as the presence of other Western countries in the area has been altered and the resource potential of the area has become more important, we have been conducting more frequent naval deployments in the Indian Ocean.

The level of funding requested and the nature of intended improvements are in keeping with the limited character of our operations. The expenditures are further justified as measures which will shorten the length of the supply line and reduce the strains which our deployments could place on our limited logistical support resources in the Pacific. It is also important to recognize that construction of expanded facilities on Diego Garcia does not imply a significant new increase in the U.S. military presence in the area.

- 2 -

I know that you recognize the importance of this proposal and am confident that I can count on your support to resist any efforts to reduce the funding to carry it out or to restrict otherwise my latitude to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gerald R. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Honorable John C. Stennis
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510