

[Lower Issue]

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N.J. [3/64]

DISCUSSION PAPER

Kow or 10 Jan

1. Last August, I proposed to Secretary McNamara deployment of a carrier force to the Indian Ocean area. In this region we have, and can expect to have, national security problems ranging from the current tension between Pakistan and India and dormant conventional war situations such as the Chinese-Indian border, to the contingency of development of a nuclear capability by Communist China.

2. With presently available US forces permanent deployment of a carrier force is not possible, but Defense has worked out a plan under which a carrier from the Seventh Fleet, accompanied by three destroyers and a fleet oiler, could be intermittently deployed for up to two months out of every six. These relatively short cruises will involve only insignificant additional expenditures. We have on previous occasions sent carriers and other vessels on goodwill cruises and on CENTO exercises into the Indian Ocean. The element of continuity is new.

3. We have informally tested the British and some governments in the area regarding this idea. The British, Thais, New Zealanders, Australians, Iranians and Malaysians welcomed the move as a significant strengthening of the Free World position.

President Ayub has been reserved and somewhat critical, possibly because of pique based on the erroneous belief that we had informed New Delhi before Karachi. Most Pakistani and Indian press comment has been quite critical. Publicly the Indian Government has avoided the issue by indicating it has not been asked to receive naval visits. Nehru has said publicly India could not object to anyone going on the high seas, but the Indians have informally asked that we not request port visits on the first cruise. Ceylon has been officially and unofficially critical and has tried to link the cruise to a prohibition against nuclear weapons entering its ports.

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Ceylon, of course, is pursuing an adamantly neutralist course and rejects any reliance on military strength. For India the problem essentially is one of internal politics; for instance, the present government does not wish to give the Krishna Menon and other left-wing groups something to chew on publicly even though two branches of the Indian military have let us know privately they favor such evidence of military support. For Pakistan the problem is primarily one of external politics in that they do not wish to welcome American military force while they are "normalizing" their relations with Red China and are playing down the Chinese military threat. Simultaneously, the Paks are trying to discomfit India by underlining publicly every Indian step away from neutrality. Thus the embittered and entangled politics of the sub-continent determine public expressions on this issue more than the fundamental attitude of either government toward the deployment.

4. In Indonesia there have been inspired public protests and demonstrations against a cruise into "the Indonesian Ocean" by leftist and Communist elements and our Embassy thinks we may have to consider evacuating the Consulate at Medan (Sumatra) as the force passes through the Malacca Strait under the right of innocent passage. However, the Embassy has not recommended against proceeding with the cruise. Because we have wished not to upset the cease-fire in Borneo, we have solicited the advice of Thai Foreign Minister Thanat, who played a mediating role in the Maphilindo talks. He saw no reason why the cruise should interfere with the Maphilindo negotiations. Thanat acknowledged the Indonesians might use the cruise as a pretext to break up the talks but if that were the case, it meant they had no intention of finding a solution.

5. Most adverse reactions to the press leak were inspired by leftist, pacifist and Communist agitation. Predictably, Chinese propaganda has been especially heavy. A decision to defer our plans in face of this agitation would damage our credibility and the constancy of our

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policy and leadership in the eyes of the nations whose resistance we hope to stiffen. It would also encourage the Chinese and the Indonesians to continue and intensify their policy of agitation against Western containment of their expansionism.

6. Late last year, a French carrier task force cruised extensively in the Indian Ocean off East Africa. A Commonwealth naval exercise involving a carrier and over 20 other ships from the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India is now taking place in the Andaman Sea (Bay of Bengal) and demonstrations in Indonesia against the exercise fizzled out. Canadian destroyers transited the Malacca Strait without reaction from Indonesia. British and other naval forces pass through the Malacca Strait continuously and without incident.

7. US and UK delegations have just concluded favorably talks in London concerning greater US defense participation in the Indian Ocean, complementing but not replacing the present British strategic posture. (In addition to the naval deployment, such activity could mean installation of communications and austere base facilities on British-controlled islands.) The delegations jointly concluded that the critics of an increased American presence in the Indian Ocean area were likely to be more vocal than the supporters of this development. The UK delegation, however, welcomed the American initiative and regarded this new American presence as an important deterrent and stabilizing factor.

8. In the Indian Ocean region there is cold war pressure against the West and fertile ground for local conflicts that can be exploited by the Communists. By utilizing and demonstrating the freedom of the seas, a carrier force can reinforce our mainland commitments, reassure our friends, conduct shows of force as necessary and carry out disaster relief as needed. Even its intermittent presence would add to the factors any potential

RWK concurs

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aggressor would have to take into account, and give us increased options in local crisis situations. This would very importantly apply if the proposed dual capability (conventional and nuclear) were to be established now, in advance of, rather than in reaction to, Communist China attaining a nuclear capability.

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