

~~SECRET~~U.S. DEFENCE INTERESTS in the INDIAN OCEANMEMORANDUM of U.K./U.S. LONDON DISCUSSIONSFebruary 1964

Official discussions between representatives of the U.K. and U.S. Governments took place in London from February 25-27, 1964. On the U.K. side, the Foreign Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, Colonial Office, Ministry of Defence and Service Departments took part. On the U.S. side, the Departments of State and of Defense and the military commands concerned were represented. A list of both delegations is at Annex A. The following is agreed between the two sides as recording the results of the discussions and recommendations to their respective governmental authorities for future action.

Background

2. The U.S. Government is considering a greater defense presence in the Indian Ocean area to complement (but not in any way to replace) the existing British effort in this area. U.S. participation is likely to mean over a period of time:-

(a) Periodic visits by a U.S. task force into the

Indian Ocean area

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- (b) The installation of military communications and technical facilities on islands under British sovereignty
- (c) The development of austere base facilities to support U.S. forces which may be deployed in the area.

H.M.G. in the U.K. have welcomed this American initiative and agree that their joint basic objectives in the Indian Ocean area are first to deter Communist encroachment on countries bordering the Indian Ocean and second to have the capacity to deal firmly and rapidly with local disturbances in the area.

3. It was accepted by both delegations that the U.S. interest in developing a greater defense presence and support facilities in the area was conceived as a complement to the existing U.K. strategic posture, and would provide a valuable joint insurance in case of any loss or limitation of use of existing facilities. Political reactions by countries on the periphery and presentation by both Governments to third countries of the American initiative

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4. The two delegations agreed on a joint assessment (at Annex B) of the probable reactions of countries on the periphery to the American initiative and on the line which should be followed by both Governments in presenting this, as the need arises, to third countries.

5. As regards periodic visits of the task force, the U.S. delegation agreed to keep H.M.G. informed of U.S. general intentions and, in particular, to give as much notice as possible of requests to visit any U.K. bases.

U.S. Interest in technical and support facilities

6. The U.S. delegation confirmed their positive interest in the development of a communications facility, subject to joint survey, in Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago, which is now under the administration of Mauritius. They also expressed interest in the development of austere support facilities in Diego Garcia, and in a lower order of priorities possibly in Aldabra, the remainder of the Seychelles area, and the Cocos/Keeling Islands (under Australian administration). Such facilities might include in the long-term:-

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- (a) Stockpile area for substantial portion of an Army division plus other pre-stockage facilities.
- (b) Air base capable of supporting cargo, troop carrier, and tanker aircraft. Facilities to support anti-submarine patrol operations and air logistic operations. Parking area for two to four squadrons of aircraft.
- (c) Naval anchorage and base area to support a carrier task force, amphibious, and support ships.
- (d) Communications station.
- (e) Amphibious staging area.
- (f) Space tracking and communications facilities.
- (g) Fuel and ammunition storage.
- (h) Secondary support anchorages and logistic air strips.

The U.K. delegation reserved their position about the dimensions of any space tracking facilities which the U.S. might possibly propose to establish on Diego Garcia.

The U.S. delegation recognized that topography might preclude the location of facilities for the above objectives in one single island and, since the entry of their forces into

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the area in individual instances might be from either East or West, according to circumstances, envisaged the development of some support facilities at both extremes of the Indian Ocean, with, ideally, a principal base area in the center. The U.S. delegation emphasized that they wished to avoid the political problems arising from the development of military facilities in populated areas and to have assured security of tenure for at least 25 years.

Diego Garcia

7. Subject to survey, the U.S. delegation envisaged that if H.M.G. agreed, the most suitable arrangement would be that H.M.G. should be responsible for making available the necessary land, at H.M.G.'s expense. H.M.G. would also be responsible for any resettlement of population and compensation. For their part the U.S. Government would undertake to accept construction and maintenance costs of the facilities they would build and to share the facilities with the U.K. The two Governments would consult as necessary about the establishment of any possible U.K. military facilities which might be required in the island.

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8. It was agreed however by both delegations that it would be imprudent to undertake any survey until the constitutional future of Diego Garcia (together with the remainder of the Chagos Archipelago) was determined. The U.K. delegation undertook to recommend to H.M.G. that in the light of the joint strategic interest, the feasibility of the transfer of the administration of Diego Garcia (and the remainder of the Chagos Archipelago) and the Agalega Islands from Mauritius should be pursued as rapidly as possible and to inform the U.S. authorities if and when such transfer was effected.

9. When it is agreed that a survey can take place, this should be a joint project, under U.K. auspices, with the U.S. contingent of minimum size necessary. The U.K. would provide one of the H.M. ships for the purpose.

ALDABRA

10. The U.S. delegation expressed a possible interest in the eventual development of an air staging post in the Western Indian Ocean. Aldabra seemed a likely possible site for this. The U.K. delegation said there might well be a future U.K. requirement of a similar nature in this area and made available

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to the U.S. side a survey for a possible airfield, which had already been completed of Aldabra. Consideration of such a facility was agreed by both delegations to be a matter for further reference to governmental authorities.

Cocos/Keeling Islands

11. The U.S. delegation explained that they had already been advised informally by Australian authorities of interest in U.S. use of facilities to be developed in the Cocos/Keeling Islands. It was agreed by both delegations that since the U.K. also shared a positive interest in facilities there, further approaches to the Australians might best be undertaken in concert by the U.K./U.S. At the same time a general explanation would be given to the Australians of the discussions held between the U.K. and the U.S. It was agreed that the U.K. and U.S. Governments would keep in close touch on this matter.

Summary of agreed recommendations

12. The U.K. delegation agreed to recommend to the U.K. governmental authorities that they should: -

- (a) Consider favourably the possibility of the development by the U.S. of such facilities on U.K. island possessions as they may require, on the following general principles: -

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(i) H.M.G. should be responsible for acquiring land, resettlement of population and compensation at H.M.G.'s expense.

(ii) U.S. Government should be responsible for all construction and maintenance costs.

(iii) U.S. Government would share these facilities, during development and subsequently, with the U.K.

(iv) The two governments would consult as necessary about the establishment of any possible U.K. military facilities that might be required.

(b) Pursue as rapidly as possible the feasibility of transfer of the administration of Diego Garcia (and other islands in the Chagos Archipelago) and the Agalega Islands from Mauritius.

(c) As soon as politically practicable, facilitate a joint survey of Diego Garcia and any other islands under British sovereignty in the Indian Ocean area that the U.S. may require.

13. The U.S. delegation agreed: -

(a) To recommend to the U.S. Governmental Authorities acceptance of the proposals set out in paragraph 12 above.

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- (b) To consider further the location of a site for an air staging post in the Western Indian Ocean.
- (c) To consider further whether jointly to approach the Australian Government regarding possible use of facilities in the Cocos/Keeling Islands.
- (d) To communicate further with the U.K. regarding all the above.

London
27th February, 1964

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