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in writing at Tag Shepard's request  
Am giving original to him, in case he and you  
agree to suggest hitting Macmillan for an anchorage at  
Diego Suarez.  
June 19, 1963  
PWT  
2  
Got it wrong  
Komer

# MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Despite my parochial viewpoint, I see an increasingly strong case for maintaining a small task force in the Indian Ocean. This perennial Navy request has been pooh-poohed in the past largely because of fears that it would grow like Topsy into a whole Indian Ocean fleet and involve expensive new bases. But a less ambitious project might be quite useful, especially if the Navy could settle for a protected anchorage or use of UK bases.

It is simple fact that our greatest lack of conventional deterrent power lies along the broad arc from Suez to Singapore. While our forces in the Europe/Mediterranean and Far East areas might even be termed excessive, the reverse is true in the area from the Red Sea to the Bay of Bengal, which also happens to be the farthest away from the US (thus complicating our problem of strategic lift). And we can't even fit our big carriers through Suez.

We have traditionally left the defense of this region to the British, yet their strength is waning at a time when we face a potential show of force or actual combat needs ranging from Saudi Arabia to the Persian Gulf and Iran through India and Burma to Malaysia. Mobile, sea-based, air power could be a real asset to us here, e. g. in carrier demonstrations like the one we almost ran in the Bay of Bengal during the Chinese attack last fall. It would also minimize the need for expensive on-shore base rights, which would be politically difficult to obtain.

What also makes an Indian Ocean force more feasible is that as we deploy POLARIS to Atlantic and Mediterranean waters, the need for substantial carrier air is reduced. Given our substantial fixed investment in the carriers, deploying a few of them to where we are weakest might make sense. It would give quite a fillip to the Shah, Faysal, Ayub, Nehru and others at the least and lend more credibility to our statements we could support them effectively if the need arose.

In sum, if we want to beef up our capabilities in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf/Red Sea area, a carrier force with conventional fire power (which I understand could reach far enough inland to cover most threatened frontiers) might be a good way to buy new flexibility by redeploying assets we've already got.

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R. W. Komer