

35. Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson<sup>1</sup>

Washington, March 16, 1964.

Bundy and I heartily endorse the concept of intermittent (and perhaps later permanent) deployment of a small carrier task force in the Indian Ocean.

Suez to Singapore is the only area where, despite some major commitments and responsibilities, we have as yet no deployed quick-reaction combat power. So as the area farthest removed from the US, it is ideally suited for the unobtrusive use of carrier-based air power (which minimizes the need for politically sensitive onshore bases).

The pending initial deployment has caused some reactions, especially from Indonesia, which sees it as a possible attempt to deter moves against Malaysia. But there is merit in letting Sukarno think so. To minimize the risk of more Indo noisemaking, we hope to slip the squadron quietly past Sumatra, and to emphasize that it is going to cruise in the *other* end of the area (East Africa-Persian Gulf). In any case, the longer term plusses from quietly showing US power in the Indian Ocean seems to justify braving any initial reactions, which will probably soon die down.<sup>2</sup>

R.W. Komer

<sup>1</sup> Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, NSAMs, NSAM 289, Indian Ocean Naval Deployment. Secret. Attached was a March 15 memorandum from Rusk to Johnson recommending that the President approve the cruise in the Indian Ocean area of a U.S. Navy carrier with three destroyer escorts and an oiler, to be known as "the Concord