

NAVAL MESSAGE

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NAVY DEPARTMENT

ACTION

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1412

INFO DOD

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS 107

CINCSRIKE/CINCMCAFSA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 786

OL-9 MAHE

LONDON 9440

1. NOV. 15 SUNDAY EXPRESS RUNS MAJOR FRONT-PAGE STORY ON
 NAVAL BASE AT DIEGO GARCIA ALLEGEDLY BEING PLANNED BY BRITIAN
 AND U.S. UNDER SEVEN-COLUMN BANNER HEADLINE "BRITAIN AND
 U.S. PLAN BIG NEW SEA BASE". ROSS MARK WRITING UNDER WASHINGTON
 DATELINE SAYS US AND BRITIAN ARE DISCUSSING PLANS
 TO CREAT A MAJOR NAVAL BASE IN INDIAN OCEAN TO MEET
 GROWING SOVIET CHALLENGE FOR CONTROL OF THE AREA.

2. "AMERICAN PLANNERS SEE A POWERFUL ANGLO-AMERICAN
 BASE AT DIEGO GARCIA AS A KEY LINK IN A NETWORK OF SPY
 SATELLITES, POLARIS SUBMARINE BASES, NAVAL YARDS AND MILITARY
 AIRPORTS TO OFFSET FLEETS FROM RUSSIA AND EVENTUALLY CHINA."

3. MARK SAYS PROJECT HAS ASSUMED URGENCY BY LOOMING PROSPECT
 THAT SUEZ CANAL WILL BE REOPENED UNDER SOVIET CONTROL;
 ALREADY AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOVIET SHIPS EAST OF SUEZ HAS
 RISEN FROM 3 TO 21 AND THESE ARE EXPECTED TO BE RAPIDLY
 SUPPLEMENTED BY WARSHIPS NOW IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. SOVS
 CAN COUNT ON SIX FIRST-CLASS BASES IN INDIAN OCEAN THEATRE:
 1) ADEN; 2) SOCOTRA; 3) HODEIDA; 4) BERBERA IN SOMALIA;
 5) FACILITIES "IN THE SEYCHELLES AREA; AND 6) PORT SUDAN.

4. MARK SATES US WOULD UNDERWRITE COSTS OF BUILDING

61(3) ...COG

60(3) 63(1) 092(7) FP(1) BFR(1) IP(5) +007

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ENCLOSURE (1) to CNO Set/Hand 000007 Pg1
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AT DIEGO GARCIA A NAVAL REFUELLING STATION, REFITTING BASE, AND ARSENAL, FOR BRITAIN, BASE WOULD BE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROPOSED JOINT NAVAL FORCE WITH AUSTRALIA, NZ, SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA.

5. AMERICANS REGARD INDIAN OCEAN AS CRITICAL AREA IN "RETALIATION STRATEGY", SAYS ARTICLE, BECAUSE POLARIS SUBS IN INDIAN OCEAN CAN FIRE INTO SOV HEARTLAND USING HIMALAYAS AS SCREEN TO PREVENT EARLY DETECTION BY SOVIET ABM DEFENCES. WASHINGTON ALSO BELIEVES THREAT OF SOVIET NAVAL DOMINATION OF INDIAN OCEAN IS IMMEDIATE AND REAL, AND WITH PEKING NOW COMMITTED TO TANZANIAN RAILWAY PROJECT, FORESEES EVENTUAL CHINESE NAVAL CHALLENGE IN THE OCEAN. US HAS LAUNCHED A SPY SATELLITE THAT WILL BE MOVED INTO STATIONARY ORBIT OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, TO MONITOR RUSSIAN ROCKET LAUNCHING "BEFORE THEY LEAVE THE PAD", AND ALL MOVEMENT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN BELOW.

6. FOR THESE REASONS, SAYS MARK, AMERICANS HAVE ASKED LONDON TO RESURRECT NEGOTIATIONS ON DIEGO GARCIA PROJECT, CONSIDERED AND SHUNTED ASIDE IN 1962.

7. COMMENT: FONOFF RECEIVED ADVANCE WORD YESTERDAY THAT ARTICLE WOULD APPEAR, AND BRIEF SUMMARY OF ITS CONTENT, FCO NEWS DEPT HAS INSTRUCTIONS TO STICK WITH AGREED GUIDELINES, AND URWICK (DEFENSE DEPT, FCO) HAS PROMISED TO CONSULT IMMEDIATELY IF REAL PROBLEM ARISES, ANNENBERG

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