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Authority NND 969 023
By DDH NARA Date 11/17/05

Sub Num 70-73 59/150/67/1/5



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

DDH
SIGN (LETTON)

January 20, 1972

SECRET

TO: AF - Mr. David D. Newsom

FROM: AF/C - Herman J. Cohen

SUBJECT: Deputy Under Secretary Hilbert's Letter to You of
January 10, 1972 - ACTION MEMORANDUM

Mr. Hilbert's letter is a harsh criticism of our Embassy in Port Louis for having recommended in a December airgram that the Department pay more attention to the fate of the inhabitants of Diego Garcia evacuated by the British at our request during the construction of our communications base on the island. Mr. Hilbert's letter is intemperate and at times illogical. His main point appears to be that the evacuation of the islanders is a purely British matter in which we should not be involved. This thesis conflicts with a cable he cleared last February acknowledging the recognition by State and Defense that the United States Government would share in any criticism levied against the British for failing to meet their responsibilities to the island's inhabitants.

As Mr. Hilbert's affiliation is to the Air Force, which heretofore has had little to do with Diego Garcia, it is not clear what responsibility he has for determining United States Government policy in this instance. PM prefers to sidestep a confrontation with him over BIOT, believing his objections will not prevent our asking the British for more information on the relocation and compensation of the Ilois (a cable to this effect is at the Pentagon for clearance). However, because Hilbert's letter now is a matter of record, I believe our reply should at least restate the basis of our interest in the welfare of the Ilois, rebutt some of his grosser inaccuracies, and defend our Embassy's initiative.

RECOMMENDATION - That you sign the attached letter to Mr. Hilbert.

Attachment: REF SEY

As stated.

xx REF IS IND-25

SECRET

AF/C:JKBishop, Jr:ls 1/18/72

Clearance: L/AF - Mrs. Verville
PM - Mr. Beers
AF/RA - Mr. Kormann
AF/E - Mr. Hardy