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**FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES
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Near East Region**

**Department of State
Washington, DC**

1967-68

See other copies in 67

Indian Ocean

33. Airgram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom/1/

CA-7176

Washington, January 21, 1964, 10:47 a.m.

/1/Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, DEF 1 IND. Secret. Drafted by C. Arnold Freshman and Winston Lord (G/PM) on January 20; cleared by Gatch (DOD/ISA), Officer in Charge of UK Affairs Thomas M. Judd, FE Office of Regional Affairs Politico-Military Affairs Adviser Captain Robert B. Wood, AF Office of Inter-African Affairs Politico-Military Adviser Eric E. Oulashin, NEA Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Regional Affairs Officer in Charge of Politico-Military Affairs Colonel Donald W. Bunte, and Office of UN Political Affairs Officer in Charge of Dependent Area Affairs Richard V. Hennes; and approved by Office of Politico-Military Affairs Director for Operations Howard Meyers. Repeated to New Delhi, Karachi, CINCSRIKE for POLAD, CINCPAC for POLAD, and CINCLANT for POLAD.

SUBJECT

Indian Ocean Talks with British

REF

Embtels 3248,/2/ 2379/3/ and previous messages.

/2/Dated January 15. (Ibid., POL AFR)

/3/Dated November 15, 1963. (Ibid., DEF 15 UK-US)

State-Defense message. Attached is the preliminary talking paper on Indian Ocean islands which the British requested from us before beginning discussions in London on this subject. The Embassy is requested to review this paper and make any modifications deemed advisable. Substantive changes should, of course, be referred to Washington for State-Defense approval before submission to the British. Otherwise, you should present this paper to the Foreign Office, stating that we are ready to begin discussions in London

on February 25 or 26.

There have been several developments concerning the Indian Ocean since these talks were first proposed, including the proposed visits to the area by a carrier task force, and the transfer of theater responsibilities to CINCSTRIKE/CINCMEAFA. Any discussions with the British on the Indian Ocean will logically relate these various elements in an integrated approach to overall US-UK future intentions in the area. Therefore, while we have kept the attached talking paper focused on the original subject of possible small island bases, we have also inserted some language at the end of it which would permit us to expand the scope of the talks to the extent that we and the British are prepared to do at the time.

Rusk

Attachment

DEFENSE PROBLEMS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA

① The United States interest in exploring certain aspects of the US/UK military posture in the Indian Ocean area arises from an essentially simple proposition. On the one hand, we note a variety of threats to the political stability and security of the area. Among these factors we would include the existence of massive communist military power north of the Indian Ocean periphery with the added prospect of Communist China attaining a nuclear capability in the foreseeable future.

We are also concerned that dissidence among and within the nations of the periphery could produce local disorders, offering the communists attractive opportunities for various forms of influence and intervention. In the Arabian Peninsula, the United States has important interests in Saudi Arabia and has pledged its support to the reformist-minded Faisal regime. Arab nationalism in the Persian Gulf Shaykhdoms, which are under varying degrees of British protection, is becoming a threat to Western interests, particularly the British. This, coupled with the fact that the Persian Gulf area is the largest source of petroleum available to the West on financially acceptable terms, makes the Peninsula a key area which warrants our joint attention. There is also the problem of Malaysia.

We assess these threats against the acknowledged interest of the West in maintaining the general stability of the area and the independence of its governments from Communist Chinese and/or Soviet domination. Since the end of World War II the UK has provided the predominant Western military forces in the area, and it is expected that this will continue. The US, however, believes it is desirable to examine ways and means of improving, even on an austere basis, the overall Western military posture in the Indian Ocean.

② On the other hand, we are conscious of serious potential difficulties in the application of US military influence in the area, should this ever become necessary. The circumstances in which such a decision might be taken, and the level of force required under any set of conditions, are, of course, not fully predictable. Such factors as the nature of the particular threat, the practicability of seeking concerted action under UN auspices, and the requirement for reserve capability to meet simultaneous contingencies elsewhere would all

demand consideration at the time. It is clear, however, that once a decision was made to bring military force to bear, its application should be swift and decisive.

The area itself does not possess, for example, indigenous forces or support systems capable of protracted defense against a determined external challenge. This would increase the urgency of any response we decided to make, and in this respect difficult problems can be foreseen. The difficulties lie largely in the great distances over which operational units and their follow-on support would have to travel. Even more important would be the possibility that even these long routings could not be politically assured, but might be beset by possible complications such as refusal of overflight rights, terminal air facilities, or the denial of passage through Suez.

We are currently studying various ways in which these potential difficulties might be alleviated. For a variety of reasons, we are not now considering the continuous deployment of forces or the establishment of extensive facilities within the area. We feel that such an approach is outside the scope of our present defense resources, considering the demands of other theatres. We are, therefore, focusing on less conspicuous ways of supplementing and facilitating the employment of the highly mobile air, land, and naval forces on which we would expect to rely. In this regard, studies are in progress on the possible use of vessels as floating depots in forward areas, and on the possible prestockage of equipment at key locations for subsequent marrying with mobile combat units which might be deployed into the area under various contingencies.

In this context, we are particularly interested in the potential usefulness of a number of strategically situated Indian Ocean islands under British control. It is not possible to predict, apart from the specific circumstances of a case, how various governments on the Indian Ocean periphery would react to US or UK military operations in the area. However, it is evident that strategic locations on the continental mainlands might be controlled preponderantly by regimes which were not, or could not appear to be, sympathetic to any active Western military presence. Thus, we cannot assume that in any military operation we might undertake in the area we would have adequate access to staging or support sites on the periphery. This makes it important, in our view, to keep available wherever possible those island locations which could be put to the military service of the West in an emergency without delay, negotiation, or political restraint. Such locations might then be used on an "as is" basis during a spontaneous contingency, or for the development of austere staging or other facilities in a pre-emergency period. It is believed that certain of the Indian Ocean islands under British control might lend themselves to such planned or pre-arranged use. They do not appear to us to be capable of supporting serious independence movements and probably are too remote and culturally isolated to figure plausibly in the plans of any mainland government.

Examples of the island locations we have in mind are those in the Chagos Archipelago and those administered as part of the Seychelles Colony, but lying outside the main Seychelles group (Coetivy, Ile des Roches, Aldabra). Our concern with the future availability of such islands for possible contingency use is, of course, distinct from our more immediate and concrete interests in the satellite tracking station now operational in the Seychelles and an Indian Ocean communications station (in which regard we have requested authorization to conduct a survey of the Chagos Archipelago).

We believe that the exploration of this total problem could usefully proceed in both military and political discussions. We envisage the military talks as encompassing a joint assessment of (a) the potential military threats confronting us in the area, (b) general plans for the use of forces and facilities existing in the area, and for bringing additional force to bear as necessary, and (c) the potential military value in a contingency situation of the various Indian Ocean islands. In connection with (c), a joint UK-US military survey of promising island locations may be desirable.

At the political level we would anticipate discussing (a) the prospects for long-term retention of various of the Indian Ocean islands for use in various forms by our military establishments; (b) arrangements which it might be suitable and feasible to make now for this purpose, including arrangements to minimize exposure of these islands to decolonization pressures being exerted in and through the UN; and (c) the local political and economic impacts of any military utilization of such islands. On the latter point, we would wish initially to have the British participants, given the more extensive British experience in the area, identify the specific problems which might emerge, and suggest for consideration ways in which these problems might be handled.

We envisage that the talks will focus primarily on these islands. In addition, we would be prepared to discuss generally the related aspects of such/4/ developments as the forthcoming deployment of U.S. Naval units into the Indian Ocean and the new responsibilities of the U.S. unified command CINCSTRIKE/CINCMEAFSA.

/4/Note: "such" includes East Africa if necessary. [Footnote in the source text.]

In view of the current indigenous reaction to recent unfortunate public revelations of US intent to periodically deploy an attack carrier task force into the area as well as of our interest in exploring the possibilities of providing for support facilities there, it would be hoped that the substance of the talks can be closely held.

34. Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs (Kitchen) to Secretary of State Rusk/1/

Washington, March 3, 1964.

/1/Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 68 A 306, 381 UK, 6 March 1964. Secret. Drafted by Meyers and Kitchen. Copies were sent to Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs William R. Tyler, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Marshall Green, and Talbot. Sent through U. Alexis Johnson. Attached to a March 6 memorandum from Kitchen to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Regional Affairs Frank K. Sloan stating that the Secretary had approved the statement and recommendations that they and the British had developed jointly in London, which meant that the Department was prepared to move forward as rapidly as State and Defense jointly deemed it desirable to put into effect the recommendations that called for U.S. action. Kitchen said he hoped for a similarly affirmative reaction from Defense and the Joint Chiefs

of Staff.

SUBJECT

Discussions with the British on Indian Ocean Island Facilities

1. You approved on February 14 a memorandum outlining the area of discussions which Frank Sloan (DOD) and I expected to cover with British officials in London (Tab B)./2/ The talks were held February 25-27 and centered on long range U.S. defense interests in the Indian Ocean area and on U.K. support for this American presence as complementary to their own.

/2/Not attached to source text.

2. Before departing London, we prepared a report which transmits an agreed U.S.-U.K. statement of the results of the discussions, a joint analysis of the political effect of such increased U.S. defense presence in the area, a British military appreciation of the potential for strategic development of Indian Ocean Islands under British sovereignty, and a summary of essential data on the islands. Pending arrival of the report, I summarize here the major impressions received and attach for your perusal the agreed statement of recommendations for future action (Tab A)./2/

a. It was clear that the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence were pleased at the U.S. initiative and that they wished to be as cooperative as feasible, having in mind their own interests. They noted they intend to remain in the area in force, and that our presence would complement theirs, rather than substitute for it.

b. British strategic concepts are similar to our own, in that they envisage development of islands as supplementing existing bases or staging facilities on the Indian Ocean littoral, and as reinforcement in depth for mainland commitments. For example, they favor U.S. development of the Chagos Archipelago for a central ocean communications station and austere supporting facilities. The U.K. would like to share use of an oil storage depot and might share airfield facilities if their position in Gan became untenable.

The U.K. strongly favors development of an airfield on Aldabra (an uninhabited Crown island 500 miles off Tanganyika), which we would share, in order to anticipate inability to overfly Africa from Ascension Island, and to provide a staging area for actions in East Africa. (Similarly Aldabra would be useful to the USAF and CINCSRIKE for operations either from Ascension or through Turkey and Iran.)

They, as we, could usefully employ facilities in the Cocos/Keeling Islands in conjunction with the Australians thus, with Diego Garcia and Aldabra, creating a strategic triangle.

They understand we envisage development of austere air and harbor facilities over a long term, and that except for a communications station on Diego Garcia, firm decisions as to the future have yet to be made in the USG.

c. Colonial Office representatives, while sympathetic to U.S. interests tried unsuccessfully to obtain some indications the U.S. could help with aid programs or by large employment operations to benefit local economies. We made clear we preferred exclusive control,

preferably without employing local inhabitants, in islands where we might install facilities, while of course being willing to share these facilities with the U.K. As you will note in the summary of agreed recommendations at Tab A, the U.K. delegation agreed that the U.K. should be responsible for acquiring land, resettling the population and compensating them therefor, at HMG's expense, while the U.S. would be responsible for construction and maintenance costs.

d. With regard to our present and funded requirement for a communication station, it was agreed a joint survey of Diego Garcia should take place quickly, the timing being dependent on British decisions when and how to transfer the administration of Diego Garcia from Mauritius. Here, despite Colonial Office reservations and desire to consult local authorities, the Foreign Office clearly indicated that control over the Chagos Archipelago (including Diego Garcia) should be transferred in such way as to minimize substantially or remove the possibility that use of the islands could be hampered by external pressures for self-determination.

e. Incident to the central negotiation, the British accepted the U.S. draft on terms of operation for the U.S. satellite tracking station in the Seychelles.

3. If you approve the statement and recommendations regarding U.S. actions contained at Tab A, I will take the necessary steps to proceed with DOD to move forward as recommended, in concert with all concerned agencies and departments.³

/3/Approved by Rusk on March 5.

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

Washington, March 16, 1964.

/1/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 Squadron," as the first phase of the introduction into that area of U.S. military force on an intermittent but regular basis.

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./2/

/2/A notation in Bundy's handwriting reads: "RWK: This needs a strong memo for my sig.: President has approved & why." The President initialed a handwritten approval line.

R.W. Komer

36. National Security Action Memorandum No. 289/1/

Washington, March 19, 1964.

/1/Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, NSAMs, NSAM 289, Indian Ocean Naval Deployment. Secret.

MEMORANDUM FOR

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT

Indian Ocean Naval Deployment

The President approves both the concept of periodic naval task force cruises in the Indian Ocean and the initial deployment recommended in the Secretary of State's March 15 memorandum to him on "Cruise of 'Concord Squadron' in Indian Ocean." /2/ He regards this as a most appropriate use of mobile air/sea power in an area of considerable strategic importance to the United States.

/2/See footnote 1, Document 35.

In the light of this decision, it is requested that plans for regular intermittent deployments be developed and submitted./3/

/3/On March 21 circular telegram 1747 was sent to various posts stating that the President had approved an aircraft carrier cruise in the Indian Ocean area as the first phase of introduction of U.S. military power into this region on an intermittent but regular basis. The carrier, escorted by three destroyers and supported by a fleet oiler, would be referred to as the "Concord Squadron" with no reference to the Seventh Fleet or the "Indian Ocean Task Force." (Johnson Library, National Security File; Country File, India, Vol. I, Indian Ocean Task Force)

McGeorge Bundy

37. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson/1/

Washington, July 15, 1964.

/1/Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Komer Files, Indian Ocean (incl. IOTF), December 1963-March 1966. Secret; Limit Distribution.

SUBJECT

Indian Ocean Island Facilities

Action Recommendations

1. The weekend press may have stories saying that the US and UK are jointly engaged in developing new bases in the Indian Ocean. If you are asked about it, you may wish to follow the same general line as the press guidance sent key posts (Tab B). /2/ I would hope you could limit comments to the first two paragraphs in quotes in the attachment.

/2/Attached but not printed.

2. If, however, you are pressed hard regarding our intentions to develop military facilities in the area, I think the suggested line in the last paragraph in quotes at Tab B should be adequate.

Discussion

1. In February, we initiated discussions with the British in London about possible future requirements for military resources in the Indian Ocean. Our objectives were to encourage the UK to remain in strength in this area, and to plan to develop with the UK island airstrips and anchorages to supplement existing bases and staging facilities on the Indian Ocean littoral. The joint US/UK recommendations were approved by me March 5 and by DOD April 21. They involve developing a "strategic triangle" of virtually uninhabited British or Australian islands 500 miles off Tanganyika and the southernmost parts of India and Indonesia. We plan initially to develop in the Chagos Archipelago (south of India) a central ocean communications station (already funded) and austere supporting facilities.

2. The British Cabinet agreed to these concepts May 6. While we have settled tentatively on the British islands involved, as indicated, final determination will be based upon a joint US/UK survey commencing July 17.

3. The *Washington Post* has somehow acquired all details of this story. At State Department urging, Alfred Friendly has deferred publishing the story since June 15, on condition that he would publish if it looked as though the story would leak elsewhere. Latest conversations with Friendly indicate that the *Post* is apt to print the story this coming weekend. We are very grateful that he has withheld publication this long.

4. Bob Komer and McGeorge Bundy have been kept advised of developments. Attached

(Tab A) is a more detailed explanation, which you may wish to read.

DR

Tab A

SUBJECT

Indian Ocean Island Facilities

1. Following discussions in London February 25-27, I approved on March 5, and the Department of Defense and Joint Chiefs approved on April 21, a joint US/UK agreed statement and recommendations, involving the development over the long-term of a strategic triangle of austere air and harbor facilities on Indian Ocean islands. These would supplement existing bases and staging facilities on the Indian Ocean littoral, and would reinforce in depth mainland commitments. We initiated the discussions. We thought that, by drawing the British into forward thinking about possible future requirements for military resources in the area from the Gulf of Oman eastward, the UK would be encouraged to remain East of Suez in strength. Also, we could plan for mutually advantageous island airstrips and/or anchorages to support our intermittent naval presence in the area and to facilitate necessary CINCSRIKE/MEAFSA operations under its responsibilities in Africa and the Asian subcontinent.

(a) Initially, the U.S. would develop on the Chagos Archipelago (roughly 500 miles below the southern tip of India) a central ocean communications station and austere supporting facilities (already funded). Here, the U.K. would like to share use of an oil storage depot and might share airfield facilities, if their presence in Gan becomes untenable.

(b) The U.K. plans to develop an airfield on Aldabra (an uninhabited Crown island 500 miles off Tanganyika), which we would share, in order to anticipate U.K. inability to overfly Africa from Ascension Island and to provide a staging area for actions in East Africa. Aldabra would be useful to the USAF and CINCSRIKE for operations either from Ascension or through Turkey and Iran.

(c) The U.K. and the U.S. could usefully employ facilities in the Cocos/Keeling Islands in conjunction with the Australians, thus completing the strategic triangle.

2. Apart from the communications station in the Chagos, what we have in mind are prestockage, anchorages and logistic air strips. It was agreed that the U.K. would be responsible for acquiring land, resettling population and compensating them therefor, at HMG's expense, while the U.S. would be responsible for construction and maintenance costs. We have carefully chosen areas where there is a limited number of transients or inhabitants (e.g. 100-200 people).

3. Except for Cocos, the islands in which we are interested are administered from Mauritius or the Seychelles. The British have already obtained an initially favorable reaction to our joint concepts from the Mauritian Prime Minister, and expect to sound out other key members of the local administrations on July 14. The British Cabinet decided

May 6 that they would transfer, to direct administration from London, those islands on which facilities would be constructed. Although we are reasonably certain which islands would be chosen, the actual choice will depend on a joint US/UK survey, to commence July 17. The question of transferring administration is a somewhat delicate one, on which the Mauritian Prime Minister reserved his view, and the British consequently are not now raising this issue with the other members of the local administrations.

4. The London correspondent of the *Washington Post*, during a recent trip to the Middle East, somehow acquired nearly all details of this story. At State Department request, the Managing Editor of the *Post*, Alfred Friendly, has agreed to defer publication unless it seems likely the story would leak elsewhere. The *Post* has held this story since June 15 but has become increasingly apprehensive. On July 11, Friendly insisted that the London *Economist* had all the details, the *Daily Express* had part of the story, and that the *Post* had succeeded in keeping the Washington correspondent of the London *Observer* from publishing the story. Friendly reluctantly agreed that he would withhold the story at least until July 17 or 18, when the island survey would begin, or until it looked as if the story was about to break.

5. In the judgment of my staff, with which I agree, it is unlikely that the *Post* will continue to hold off publishing a story of this magnitude longer than Friday, July 17. We are very grateful that Friendly has deferred publication over a month and, in so doing, rendered considerable service to the USG. We have an agreed press-line with the British (Tab B) and have alerted concerned posts in the Indian Ocean littoral to this effect. We are trying to persuade the British to approach key governments in the area and explain to them, before the story breaks, what our objectives are, generally along the line of the press guidance. The British are resisting informing third countries, until the story breaks. If the matter becomes public and you are asked about it, you may wish to follow the same general line as the attached guidance.

38. Letter From the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (McNaughton) to Secretary of Defense McNamara/1/

I-23,914/65

Washington, June 12, 1965.

/1/Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 70 A 3717, 680.1. Indian Ocean Islands. Secret.

SUBJECT
Indian Ocean Islands

I. Problem

Whether to contribute towards the price the British feel they must pay to detach certain

islands now part of the British dependencies that might become independent, and thus assure the availability of these islands for military purposes over the long term.

II. Background and Discussion

Concept. In early 1962, the JCS expressed their concern about the political uncertainty of US and UK overflight and staging facilities in Africa, and the Near and Middle East. They recommended making arrangements with the British that would assure the availability of selected islands in the Indian Ocean area which could be used, should the need arise, to develop alternate staging and support facilities.

Talks with the British. In early 1964, discussions were held by Jeff Kitchen (State) and Frank Sloan (ISA) with the British who agreed on the importance of setting aside a reserve of strategic islands that could be used, if needed, by both parties. At that time, it was agreed that the UK would bear the costs of detachment and that the US would bear the costs of developing those facilities needed to meet its requirements. Once developed, the facilities would be available for joint use by the UK. There was no discussion on the joint use of facilities that might be developed by the British. As a result of joint surveys last summer, the British are willing to detach the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius (far to the southwest) and Aldabra, Farquhar and des Roches from the Seychelles. (See Map at Tab A.)/2/ On the grounds that "the ante has gone up," they now ask that we contribute one-half of the anticipated detachment costs (estimated up to 10 million; US share about \$14 million).

/2/None of the tabs is printed.

US and UK Plans. At present, we have firm plans only to develop a Navy-DCS relay communications station and austere support facilities, including a landing strip, at Diego Garcia (Chagos Archipelago). This station would strengthen the weak link in the DCS between Europe and the Far East, would afford a partial alternative in the event the communications facilities at Asmara were lost, and would fill a current void in ship-shore communications in the area. Funds were sought in FY 1964, but were not approved by the Congress because firm rights to the site were not available. The Navy intends to put this item in its FY 1967 budget. The British have expressed an interest in developing Aldabra as an alternative against the possible loss of their present facilities in Aden, East Africa, and the Maldives. Both the JCS and the Secretary of the Air Force have advocated the funding in FY 1967 of austere staging facilities at Aldabra in support of potential US contingency operations (Tabs B and C). There are no other facilities in the East Africa area that the US could rely on using in the event of a need to deploy US forces to this area. Further, facilities at Diego Garcia and Aldabra plus the existing facilities at Cocos Island, an Australian dependency in the Eastern Indian Ocean, would provide access to any area in the Indian Ocean periphery via the Pacific or the Atlantic (from Ascension Island without overflights over Africa when longer range transports come into the inventory). Farquhar and des Roches have a potential use for the prestockage of material and POL, but neither we nor the British plan their development in the near future.

Implications for British presence in the Indian Ocean Area. When we raised the matter with the British last year, they sought an explicit assurance that we had no intention of replacing them in the Indian Ocean area. We gave that assurance. They made clear that

they saw the project as offering alternate British routings into the area should they be forced out of East Africa, Aden or the Maldives. They spoke of joint construction at Aldabra and have set aside half of Diego Garcia for their own future use. Our proposal to the British calls only for the development of facilities by the US when needed to meet our requirements. It does not commit us to any Indian Ocean force posture, or to any construction except to meet our own needs. We have no development plans extensive enough to give the British justification for withdrawal from the area. The detachment of the islands, in my judgment--particularly if they build at Aldabra, would tend to link the British more securely to the area, since they would be assuming direct political responsibility for the islands and would have alternatives available if East Africa, Aden, and the Maldives were lost. The State Department concurs in this assessment and, for this reason, urges some form of US assistance with respect to the detachment proceedings.

Detachment Proceedings. The British are anxious to complete the detachment proceedings before the following events later this summer: (1) the constitutional conference on the future of Mauritius (sometime between August-October); (2) renewed hostile debates in the UNGA on colonial administration; and (3) the UK Defense Policy Review which could expose the project to attack by the "west of Suez" group. To accomplish speedy detachment, the British feel they must provide various forms of compensation that could amount to &#pound;10 million (Mauritius &#pound;5.5 million; Seychelles &#pound;3.0 million; private property owners &#pound;1.5 million). The British now state that the full detachment costs would be a burden on their defense budget and have asked for a US contribution of approximately half.

III. Recommendations

- (1) That you approve a US contribution of one-half of the British detachment costs (estimated up to 10 million; US share about \$14 million). This contribution would be premised on the explicit understanding that the British would continue their responsibilities east of Suez.
- (2) That the contribution in (1) above be arranged as a set-off against R&D surcharges owed by the UK to the US. The arrangement would make clear that this set-off would in no way derogate from the principle of R&D surcharges, and that the set-off reflects a US payment towards the costs of detaching the Indian Ocean islands.
- (3) That you not approve the Air Force proposal to construct a US base at Aldabra, but that you authorize working out an arrangement that would keep the British in the lead in building a British facility at Aldabra. The latter step may require a USAF contribution towards the British costs of constructing facilities at Aldabra, for which we should receive the return consideration of US use of the facilities should the need arise.

If you approve of the foregoing, I recommend that you sign the attached memoranda to the Secretary of the Air Force/3/ and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We will work out with the State Department appropriate guidance for further discussions with the British on a contribution towards their detachment costs and on the possibility of a US contribution towards the cost of British construction at Aldabra./4/

/4/McNamara initialed the approval line on June 14.

John T. McNaughton

39. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to the Secretary of the Air Force (Zuckert)/1/

I-23,914/65

Washington, June 14, 1965.

/1/Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 70 A 3717, 680.1, Indian Ocean Islands. Secret. Drafted by Lang. Copies were sent to the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

SUBJECT

Request for Approval of Facilities to Support Contingency Planning

* I have this date authorized an offset arrangement against R&D surcharges owed by the United Kingdom, under which the United States would contribute one-half of the British costs of detaching certain islands in the Indian Ocean from their present administering authorities. I am not prepared, however, to approve the recommendation in your memorandum of May 14, 1965, /2/ that we indicate to the British our intention to proceed with the development of staging facilities at Aldabra. I consider it of cardinal importance that the British continue to shoulder their responsibilities east of Suez and, consequently, do not favor any US action that would suggest the possibility that we are willing to replace them in this area. I am prepared to assist the British, if they need our help, in the establishment of British staging facilities at Aldabra. In return, I would expect that the facilities would be available for our use should the need arise. I am authorizing the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) to work with the State Department on discussions with the British towards this end. Should these discussions lead to a requirement for USAF construction funds, I will ask that you prepare an appropriate Program Change Proposal. To avoid a premature indication to the British of our willingness to assist them in meeting the costs of construction to Aldabra, there should be no release of this information without the prior coordination by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA).

/2/Not printed. (Ibid.)

Robert McNamara/3/

/3/Printed from a copy that indicates McNamara signed the original.

40. Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)/1/

Washington, October 15, 1965.

/1/Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, Komer Memos, Vol. II. Secret.

Mac--

FYI, on *Indian Ocean bases* I find that all seems to be under control. Kitchen in London a few weeks ago managed to settle matters with the UK. They have since told Mauritius it could have its independence but that the Chagos Archipelago (Diego Garcia) would be detached.

Kitchen suspects that the Brits may have over-read a new development--we now wonder whether a commo relay station in Diego Garcia would be as useful as a communications satellite. This is simply technological progress, not a loss of interest. At any rate, the Navy is simply holding up budgeting till this matter is sorted out.

You probably know better than I that the Brits are probing for US subsidies on various specifics East of Suez. I gather our position is that these matters can only be discussed as part of a much larger issue, including our support of sterling.

RWK

41. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Komer) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) and Francis Bator of the National Security Council Staff/1/

Washington, January 26, 1966.

/1/Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Name File, Komer Memos, Vol. II. Secret.

The big remaining issue on the UK defense review seems to be the extent of future British presence in the Suez-Singapore area. I won't argue the minor aspects (e.g. evacuation of Aden, Africa, etc.). But it seems to me that our larger response must be based on the fact that, viewed globally, the new area where the US itself is militarily weakest is the Indian Ocean area. An even greater vacuum here 1968-75, because of gradual drawdown of the modest UK presence, is worrisome.

Despite our natural current focus on Southeast Asia and Indonesia, it's essential to look ahead and anticipate many new problems over the next decade in Burma, South Asia, Iran, Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa. Though we are increasingly able to deploy US forces there quickly, the Indian Ocean is the area farthest from the US. Moreover, we have to worry not only about the actual threats in this vast area but a likely decline of confidence in western support on the part of Indians, Paks, Burmese, Persians, etc., if the UK withdraws further.

So I see real advantage in attempting to keep a mobile UK carrier force in the Indian Ocean, whether based in Singapore or Australia. Even one carrier would have real flexibility to meet situations throughout the area (conventional even more than nuclear). If the UK doesn't maintain at least a carrier on station, I predict that the pressures on us to set up an Indian Ocean squadron will increase. No matter how we slice the pie, it would be far more expensive if we had to fill the power vacuum in the Indian Ocean area than to keep the UK there.

This leads to the question of what we could offer in order to encourage HMG to maintain such a force. For example, need we charge such a high price for selling secondhand carriers? Even giving them to the British under ship loan or some such device would be cheaper than maintaining US carrier task force in the Indian Ocean. A US contribution to Indian Ocean island bases or to the Australia base project might also seem sensible in this connection.

In sum, my basic point is that looking ahead for the ten years 1966-75 someone (either the US or UK) is likely to have to maintain some flexible sea/air power in the Indian Ocean. It would be far cheaper to subsidize HMG than to wake up a few years from now to find that we must substitute for the power vacuum its drawdown of forces creates.

RWK

42. Position Paper Prepared in the Department of State/1/

UKR/P-3

Washington, January 27, 1966.

/1/Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, United Kingdom, UK Defense Review, 1/27/66. Secret. Drafted by Captain Asbury Coward (G/PM) and cleared by AFI Politico-Military Adviser W. Paul O'Neill, Jr., Kitchen, and Assistant Secretary for European Affairs John M. Leddy.

UK DEFENSE REVIEW

Indian Ocean Island Base Plans

Recommended US Position:

It is in the US interest for the UK to maintain a credible presence "East of Suez" with the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) playing an important role in a support capacity.

Although the US has no immediate construction plans, we should welcome any indications of a British intention to establish such facilities as a fuel depot in Diego Garcia and an air staging base on Aldabra, with priority on the latter.

(?)
see next p.

With regard to the latter, the Defense Department would be willing to contribute to construction costs of an RAF station in return for joint usage rights.

Anticipated UK Position:

The British are caught between a need to reduce Defense expenditures as well as the atrophy of political acceptancy of so-called foreign bases on the one hand, and the necessity to protect their own interests in the area (as well as those of the West) on the other.

They may be expected, therefore, to seek the general US attitude regarding the development of these islands for defense purposes, and more immediately and precisely, if we are interested in joining them in any projects such as the air staging facility on Aldabra.

Background:

There are no known immediate firm construction or usage plans on the part of either the US or UK for the BIOT.

At one time the US was considering construction of an austere communications station and supporting facilities on Diego Garcia; however, this is not the case at this time. (HMG has been so notified.)

The UK has recently alluded to an interest in developing a POL depot on Diego Garcia.

Within the respective Defense Establishments of both governments there have been indications of an awareness of the potential value of an air staging facility on Aldabra.

The future utility of the BIOT may well be surfaced in the context of British plans "East of Suez", i.e., withdrawal from Aden, consolidation in the Persian Gulf, reductions in Southeast Africa, and even as a specific alternative to Singapore.

[Continue with the next documents]