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US-UK NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY

The Governments of the United States and of the United Kingdom announced today that construction will commence in March 1971 on an austere naval communications facility on Diego Garcia atoll in the Chagos Archipelago, British Indian Ocean Territory. The facility is being built under the terms of a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and the U.K., signed in December 1966, which makes the Islands of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) available to the U.S. and U.K. Governments for defense activities for 50 years. The facility will consist of communications, and minimum necessary support activities, including an air strip. Construction of the facility will be accomplished by the United States. Units of the U.S. naval construction force will build it. Both the British and American flags will fly over the facility and the United Kingdom will assist in its manning.

The facility will close a gap in the U.S. naval communications system. It will provide communications support to U.S. and U.K. ships and aircraft in the Indian Ocean. It is expected to be completed in less than three years.

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