

Suitland
330-78-0011
Box 63
Indian Ocean
1974

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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

January 29, 1974

Honorable James R. Schlesinger
Secretary of Defense
Washington, D. C. 20301

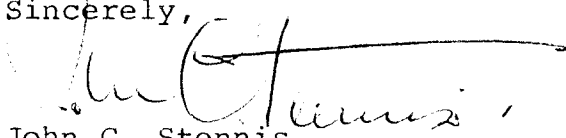
Dear Mr. Secretary:

According to recent press reports, and subsequently confirmed by letter dated January 28, 1974, from Mr. John O. Marsh of your office, the Department plans to expand the Naval Communications facility on the Island of Diego Garcia, in order to make it a useful and effective support facility for U.S. and British forces which may operate in the Indian Ocean area. In order to initiate this action, the Department proposes to request \$29 million in a supplemental appropriation bill soon to be submitted to the Congress.

As you are aware, since FY 1970 the Congress has authorized and appropriated \$20,450,000 to establish the Naval Communication facility on Diego Garcia. I was concerned about the establishment of such a facility in the first instance, and its possible effect on our foreign policy. It was my understanding, however, that it provided for a badly needed link in our communications network, and it would be confined strictly to the purpose intended, namely communications.

It would now appear that the Department intends to go far beyond the original stated intention. I should like to be promptly advised exactly what your present plans are for this installation, and your projected planned activity in the Indian Ocean area for the next 5 to 10 year period.

This information is essential to arriving at a determination as to what further action this Committee may wish to take. Very frankly, I feel that this request should have been a part of the proper authorizing legislation for Fiscal Year 1975.

Sincerely,

John C. Stennis

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

FEB 15 1974

Honorable John C. Stennis
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in reply to your January 29 request for additional information on the proposed expansion of facilities at Diego Garcia.

As you noted, the present facility on Diego Garcia was established to provide an important link in our worldwide naval communications system. Diego Garcia has proved its worth many times, most recently in providing necessary communications relay during the deployment of additional ships into the Indian Ocean area. The Diego Garcia communications facility was not, of course, designed to provide a capability for sustained logistics support for U.S. forces operating in that region.

However, changing circumstances now indicate that we should -- in our interest -- have the ability to operate routinely on a sustained basis in the Indian Ocean and its environs. The principal changes are:

- the growing Soviet naval and air presence and capability in the region;
- the probable opening of the Suez Canal permitting the Soviets the opportunity to augment their forces in the Indian Ocean from the Black Sea rather than from their Pacific Fleet, thereby saving about 18 days transit time; and
- the re-emphasized importance of the concentration of critically important oil routes both around the Horn of the U.S. and to Europe as well as across the Indian Ocean to Japan.

Existing operations in the Indian Ocean must now be supported through rights obtained from littoral states or inefficiently from more distant locations. Inadequate support facilities now limit our ability to demonstrate national interest in this area through routine presence and operations.

We are convinced that it is imperative for the U.S. to maintain a balance in the Indian Ocean area vis-a-vis the Soviets. This balance will, among

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John Stennis
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other things, signal the Soviets our intention to continue to play a role in the area, to stand by our friends, and to deter any threats to the shipping routes over which so much of the industrialized world's oil flows.

Regarding our projected or planned activity levels in the Indian Ocean for the next five to ten years, the answer depends in part on Soviet actions. At this time, we see a need to be able to augment our naval forces there somewhat more frequently than in the past in order to offset growing Soviet influence. Our presence is not to be tied to a narrow military mission, but rather, it is intended as tangible evidence of our interest -- a mutual interest with our allies and the states of the region -- in security and stability in the Indian Ocean.

In this context, we do not see expanding the Diego Garcia facilities as an event which drives our foreign policy. A more accurate view is that a perception of clear deficiencies in U.S. military capabilities in the region could cause us to lose political and diplomatic influence to the Soviets by default. Therefore, a support facility in the Indian Ocean is in response to our actual foreign policy needs rather than being a potential motivator of policy.

Without overstating our case, we believe the matter of developing the Diego Garcia communications facility into a capable yet relatively modest support complex carries a sufficient degree of urgency that it deserves being addressed as part of the FY 1974 Budget Readiness Supplemental. Hopefully, with prompt Congressional action we will be able to save some six to eight months time toward completing this effort -- time which could be important, considering the likely opening soon of the Suez Canal. Proper authorizing legislation under the Military Construction Act will, of course, be sought.

The fact sheet enclosed with our earlier correspondence to your Committee contained a breakout of the currently proposed military construction task. Although not completely defined at this time, we do not envisage a need for a very large follow-on effort. For the most part it would be limited to some additional runway construction, added aircraft parking area, more capable command control communications to the facility, and other relatively austere personnel support facilities.

We have enclosed a statement covering detailed rationale on the need for deployments in the Indian Ocean and the expansion of Diego Garcia for your review. In addition, we would like to repeat our previous offer to provide you and your Committee with a detailed briefing on our plans.

Sincerely,

SIGNED
JAMES R. SCHLESINGER

✓ LA
✓ PA
✓ Concept
✓ JCS
✓ Honey
Enclosure
a/s

DISTRIBUTION
Orig + 1 - add
SecDef
DepSecDef
OSD
S
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Cmbk
RC
ISA RF
PD
PD PA Chron
PD PA Sub
Prep by CCL Brown/PD/72247/5Feb74/bea

DECLASSIFIED
A/ISS/IPS, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
October 11, 2007

RATIONALE FOR NAVAL DEPLOYMENTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
AND PROPOSED EXPANSION OF DIEGO GARCIA

Current U.S. naval deployments in the Indian Ocean are completely consistent with our policy of periodically augmenting the minimal permanent presence we have maintained in that area for over a generation. The most recent deployments have been prompted by the Soviet naval presence there and their ability to introduce additional forces quickly into the area. Broadly speaking, the Soviets have demonstrated an increased readiness to use military assistance and shows of force to influence events where major U.S. interests are at stake, and to project military power into distant areas, including the Indian Ocean, as Soviet naval forces and airlift capabilities have grown. With the probable opening of the Suez Canal in the next two years, a still greater Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean area, which includes the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, will be both possible and probable.

In our judgment, an adequate U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean provides a clear signal to the Soviets of our resolve to ensure a credible military capability there. We are confident that the continued presence of U.S. forces in the Indian Ocean will continue to have a salutary effect on the Soviets by underscoring our strategic mobility. We wish to emphasize that our deployments are not a threat to any nation or group of nations. In this connection, no specific tasks have been provided our forces except to maintain general operational proficiency while on station in the area. However, the presence of these forces assures us an adequate

capability to meet contingency situations involving friendly governments on or near the Indian Ocean littoral, as well as offering a deterrent effect to potential harassment of significant international straits and sea lanes. These considerations have focused attention on the need for security and stability in the general area.

In sum, our capability to deploy a U.S. force into the Indian Ocean supports not only the U.S. national interest, but the interests of our closest friends and allies as well, since such a force provides a tangible reminder of our mutual interest in security and stability in the Indian Ocean. However, maintaining naval forces in the Indian Ocean is not without difficulty. The ships that have been recently deployed have come from the western Pacific. In view of the extended distances involved, it has been necessary to secure bunkering and limited facility support from friendly countries in the area. However, in looking ahead, if we wish to have the capability to move or maintain our ships in the area, development of more practical support facilities seems essential. An obvious solution is Diego Garcia, with some supplemental bunkering and aircraft landing rights elsewhere in the area.

Consequently, we intend to expand our communications facility on Diego Garcia to make it a useful and effective support facility for U.S. forces operating in the Indian Ocean area. This facility will be capable of providing support for a flexible range of activities including maintenance, bunkering, aircraft staging, and enhanced communications. The current supplemental military appropriations budget now being presented

to Congress contains a request for \$29 million to improve support facilities on Diego Garcia. Specific projects we have in mind are increased fuel storage capacity, deepening of the lagoon to provide an anchorage, lengthening the existing 8000-foot runway, and expanding the airfield parking area, in addition to certain improvements to our existing communications facility and construction of additional personnel quarters.

As you may recall, in 1965 the British constituted a number of Indian Ocean islands under their control into what is known as the British Indian Ocean Territory. By an exchange of notes on December 30, 1966, the U.S. and UK agreed that these islands would be available for the defense purposes of both governments, initially for a period of 50 years. Under the terms of this arrangement, both governments agreed in principle in December of 1970 to the establishment of a communications facility on Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago. Current plans to develop expanded logistics support facilities at Diego Garcia, available for the use of both U.S. and British forces, are in complete accord with the intent and basic philosophy set forth in the original 1966 Agreement. We will be operating from what will, in fact, be a self-sustained facility on British sovereign territory in the outer reaches of the Indian Ocean with minimal political or military visibility. Thus we believe that to assure our continued ability to deploy U.S. forces into the Indian Ocean area, the facilities we now propose at Diego Garcia are essential.