



The proposed reply at Tab A stresses that our naval presence in the Indian Ocean is consistent with our interest in peace and detente and is designed to help maintain a military balance, particularly in view of the expanded Soviet access to the region that will result from the prospective reopening of the Suez Canal. The proposed reply focuses on these points because the Ceylonese are uneasy over growing Soviet strength in the region and particularly over what they fear could be Indo-Soviet collusion at the expense of smaller states.

RECOMMENDATION: That you sign the proposed reply to Mrs. Bandaranaike at Tab A. (Text approved by Mr. Gergen's office.)

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 1, 1974

Dear Madame Prime Minister:

I have read with care your message of February 11 regarding the expansion of the Anglo-American facilities at Diego Garcia. I appreciate your confidence in writing directly and frankly to me on a subject that I know is of great concern to you. I believe direct correspondence on such a matter is more productive than a debate through the public media.

The decision to expand facilities at Diego Garcia does not represent any diminution of our strong interest in detente and in the consolidation of world peace. We earnestly look forward to the day when military facilities and weapons can be reduced worldwide. As you know, we are pursuing this objective in such negotiations as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and the talks on force reductions in central Europe. Arms limitation is a goal of major importance--one which I know is central to your own policies. It is also one which will take time to achieve.

In the meantime, we believe that the maintenance of a general military balance is necessary for the preservation of peace and for the establishment of an environment in which meaningful and balanced force limitations can take place. It is in this spirit that the decision to expand the facilities on Diego Garcia was made. This decision does not envisage the basing of military units on the island. The facilities to be established there are to provide logistical support for the operation of US naval ships when they are in the area. We believe that this capability is particularly

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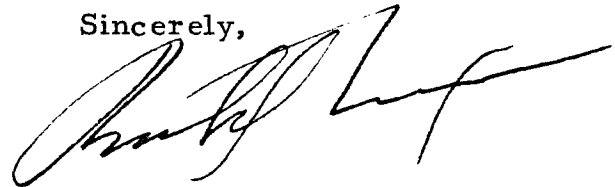
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October 11, 2007

important in light of the prospective reopening of the Suez Canal, which will give other world naval powers greatly shortened lines of communication between the Indian Ocean and their homelands.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the United States is not seeking to establish a position of special privilege in the Indian Ocean region. I also want to reassure you in the strongest possible terms that the expansion of facilities at Diego Garcia is not directed in any way against the interests of Sri Lanka or other countries in the region.

With warm personal regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be George W. Bush, written in a cursive style.

Her Excellency  
Sirimavo Bandaranaike  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Sri Lanka  
Colombo