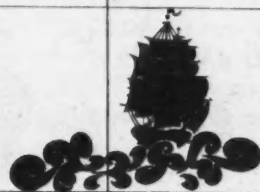




COMMANDERS
DIGEST



Diego Garcia



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Diego Garcia

A
BRIEF
ORIENTATION



Surveyors use an electrotape to measure the distance across a Diego Garcia lagoon.



Diego Garcia, the largest coral atoll of the Chagos Islands archipelago in the Indian Ocean, lies 1,000 miles south of the Indian subcontinent, and is 15 miles long and 9 miles wide. In 1966 the United States and the United Kingdom negotiated an agreement authorizing the use of the British Indian Ocean Territory for the defense purposes of both countries. Subsequently, in 1972 it was further agreed that the United States could establish a communications station on Diego Garcia for units operating in the Indian Ocean.

Since the days of the Portuguese navigators, the Indian Ocean area has been of international interest; however, the basic historic imprint in the region has been British. Prior to 1945, when the area was dominated by European colonial powers, the U.S. interest centered in the Persian Gulf. During World War II, the Persian Gulf Command was established in Iran to deliver lend-lease equipment to the U.S.S.R. Since 1948 the United States has maintained a small naval group (2 destroyers and a noncombat flagship as Middle East Force headquarters) operating out of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf.

Military advisory missions were sent to Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia in the 1950s, and substantial economic and military aid was also initiated to underscore U.S. interest in the area. Bilateral defense arrangements were negotiated with Iran and Pakistan, the Indian Ocean members of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in which the U.S. participates although not a member.

In late 1973, following the October Arab-Israeli conflict, the U.S. announced that its periodic, temporary naval deployments to the Indian Ocean supplementing the Middle East Force would be more frequent and more regular than in the past. In order to support such deployments more effectively and economically, the Administration asked Congress in 1974 for funds to construct fuel storage and other operating facilities at Diego Garcia. The lagoon would be dredged to permit temporary anchorage for a naval task group and aviation support capabilities would be added for reconnaissance and supply flights in the area.

At present there are approximately 1,100 persons on the island—450 manning the Naval Communications Station and airfield, a battalion of Seabees carrying out the construction work, and a 23-man British contingent working with the U.S. units. The United States has made clear it does not intend to station naval vessels permanently at Diego Garcia and the increased support facilities on the island would not imply an increase in the level of U.S. forces deployed to the region.

On May 12, 1975, the President certified to Congress that the new construction at Diego Garcia was essential to the national interest. On July 28, 1975, the Senate defeated a resolution that would have disapproved the new construction, thus clearing the way for it to commence.

Why the American Presence in the Indian Ocean?

by

JAMES H. NOYES

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) for Near Eastern, African and South Asian Affairs

The Secretary of Defense announced in November 1973 that we intended to return to a policy of more frequent and more regular visits to the Indian Ocean area. Perhaps I can best put that policy in perspective by reviewing the history of U.S. naval deployments to the Indian Ocean during the past year, and by discussing some of the new developments which relate specifically to our proposal to undertake a modest expansion of the facilities at Diego Garcia.

U.S. Presence

First, the three ships of Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) have continued to operate throughout this period as they have for more than a quarter of a century. The flagship of MIDEASTFOR, the USS LaSalle, has continued to be homeported in Bahrain, and two destroyers have continued to operate in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Indian Ocean on rotation from



the United States. The mission of this small command remains, as before, primarily diplomatic. By means of regular port calls, occasional participation in local exercises, and other routine contacts, MIDEASTFOR maintains continuing liaison with the navies and appropriate government officials in the area. We continue to regard this force as a useful adjunct to the entire range of U.S. diplomatic, commercial and other relationships which we

maintain with the nations of the region.

The additional deployments to which Secretary Schlesinger had reference have, during the past year, come from the Pacific Fleet. In March 1974, the carrier USS Kitty Hawk was in the Indian Ocean with three surface combatants and an oiler. This group departed in April. During July and August of 1974, the cruiser USS Chicago visited the Indian Ocean with two destroyers and



Installations on Diego Garcia, viewed from the air, top left, include an industrial site, bottom left, and a runway constructed by a battalion of Seabees.

an oiler. In November 1974, the carrier USS Constellation with four surface escorts and a submarine visited the Indian Ocean and participated in naval exercises with the members of the Central Treaty Organization.

In January and February of this year, the nuclear carrier USS Enterprise, accompanied by the nuclear cruiser USS Long Beach, two destroyers, and a fast combat support ship, visited the area—a visit which

included emergency assistance to the island nation of Mauritius, which had been struck by a violent cyclone on February 6. Since the departure of the USS Enterprise group, there have been no U.S. deployments to the central Indian Ocean from outside the area.

Over the past 14 months, we have had additional forces deployed to the Indian Ocean only about 36 per cent of the time; or, to put it another way,

during 64 per cent of this period our only naval presence in the area has consisted of the three ships of the Middle East Force. I believe that this policy has effectively demonstrated our ability to operate significant forces in this important area while avoiding any actions which might be interpreted as provocative. In view of all the discussion about U.S. military activities in the Indian Ocean, it is somewhat ironic to note that in terms of numbers of naval combatants, the United States very frequently ranks third, after France and the Soviet Union. That is, in fact, the situation at the present time.

SOVIET PRESENCE

In June of last year, there was some debate about the trend of Soviet military presence in the Indian Ocean area. Much of that doubt has been removed by the actions of the U.S.S.R. itself. In July 1974 the U.S.S.R. signed a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with the nation of Somalia. Admiral Gorshkov, the commander of the Soviet Navy, visited there in December. Last year, we reported that the

Navy men of Mobile Construction Battalion 62 sunbathe along the beach near their housing facility.

Soviets had access to the port which they constructed for Somalia at Berbera, which dominates the Gulf of Aden and the mouth of the Red Sea.

In addition to the naval communications station, the permanent barracks/repair ship, the housing ashore, the petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) storage tanks, and the pier space which was reported at that time, we have now become aware that the U.S.S.R. has commenced construction of a major airstrip, has greatly expanded the POL storage, and is constructing a missile storage and handling facility. The number of Soviet ships which visited Berbera in 1974 increased to more than 60 from fewer than 50 the year before, including the visit of a nuclear powered submarine.

Soviet forces in the Indian Ocean participated much more actively in the recent world-wide Soviet naval exercise than had been the case in 1970. One innovation during this year's exercise was the use of aerial surveillance over the Indian Ocean by Soviet aircraft—some of which operated from airfields in littoral states. The average level of Soviet combatant naval ships increased modestly in 1974 over 1973. The Soviet minesweeping operation in Bangladesh was completed, but another



minesweeping operation was undertaken in the northern Red Sea in preparation for the reopening of the Suez Canal. This latter operation included a number of first line Soviet combatant units, notably including the helicopter carrier Leningrad—the first visit of this type unit to the Indian Ocean.

In short, the Soviet presence continued to grow steadily, as it has ever since it was first established in 1968. Soviet interests in the Indian Ocean will continue to increase, particularly now that the Suez Canal once again provides more ready access. This fact is reflected in Soviet strategy, which appears to be building for the long term.

None of us in the U.S. Government believe we should base our own presence in the Indian Ocean on a narrow ship-for-ship comparison with the Soviet Union. Both nations have sufficient interests in the region to justify a presence there even if the other were absent. However, the growth of Soviet military presence in the region must necessarily remain a significant factor for us in determining our own policy.

DIEGO GARCIA

The only significant changes to our proposed expansion of facilities on Diego Garcia are those effected by the Congress. Our original request for \$32.3 million in FY 75 military

construction (MILCON) funds was reduced to \$18.1 million. We have requested an additional \$13.8 million in the current FY 76 MILCON bill, and, if the project is not disapproved, we will request a further \$5.9 million in FY 77 to complete the planned construction. (Estimated construction costs in out years may increase due to inflation.)

There have been suggestions that the true price of the Diego Garcia installation will be \$175 million. I would like to clarify this point.

The funds for Diego Garcia which have been requested in FY 75 and FY 76 were the required funds for military construction. This section of the budget does not include costs associated with salaries, with procurement of communication equipment, or with the replacement of engineering equipment associated with construction. Last year, the Navy was requested to provide an estimate of the total cost, including these additional elements. It did so, and the \$175 million figure is based on these Navy estimates which were provided to Congress. Let me review what these figures show.

First, the figures include work that has already been authorized and completed on

the communications station and its supporting facilities. Congress in 1971 authorized \$20.45 million for the construction of a limited communications station on Diego Garcia. Procurement and installation costs of the hardware for the station amounted to approximately \$2.8 million. The salaries and subsistence costs for the Seabee unit which carried out the construction came to about \$21 million. The food, fuel, repair parts and transportation of the Seabees was another \$11.4 million. And the replacement of major items of construction equipment amounted to \$9.8 million, for a total of about \$65.3 million. This is the sum which has already been spent in constructing and outfitting the communications station now operating on Diego Garcia.

Applying the same procedure to anticipated future costs in early 1974, the Navy estimated that the proposed additions to the present station would cost approximately \$108 million through FY 76. This sum, plus previous expenditures, gave a grand total of about \$173 million for the entire installation. It should be noted that this estimate did not foresee the successive delays which will now push the completion date to FY 77 or

later, so the total cost may subsequently be increased due to inflationary pressures.

In using these figures, it is important to recognize that 38 per cent of the total represents funding which has already been authorized and appropriated by the Congress, and that the remainder includes salaries and consumables as well as direct construction costs.

Our proposal for Diego Garcia involves precisely the same facilities today as those which were initially proposed in early 1974, i.e., lengthening the runway from 8,000 to 12,000 feet, increasing the available POL storage, building additional quarters for personnel assigned there, constructing a pier to facilitate cargo handling, dredging the harbor to permit several ships to anchor there simultaneously, and constructing additional utility and recreational facilities.

The more basic questions about Diego Garcia are, why do we need it and why is it so important to U.S. national interests. I believe the answer is very straightforward. The additional facilities which we have requested for Diego Garcia would provide an assured access to logistical support which, for example, could sustain the operation of a normal carrier task group in a

DIEGO GARCIA FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FY 75	(000)
POL Storage—320,000 BBL	\$ 5,492
Pier	4,000
Runway Extension/Aircraft Parking Apron	2,500
Power Plant Expansion (Phase I)	1,165
Substation	252
Subsistence Building Addition	393
Aircraft Parking Apron—25,000 SF	1,000
POL Storage—160,000 BBL	1,800
Munitions Storage—6,000 SY	500
Sub Total	\$18,102
FY 76*	
POL Storage—160,000 BBL	\$ 1,530
Power Plant Expansion (Phase II)	1,254
Aircraft Parking Apron/Runway Extension	1,173
Hangar	572
Operations Building Addition	265
Airfield Transit Storage	160
BEQ—277MN	4,325
BOQ—32MN	1,550
Ready Issue Ammunition Magazine	251
Cold Storage—4,190 SF	531
General Warehouse—13,200 SF	713
Receiver Building Addition—1,250 SF	149
Amphibious Vehicle Repair Hardstand—1,110 SF	46
Aircraft Arresting Gear	245
Utilities Distribution System	927
Armed Forces Radio & Television Station	109
Sub Total	\$13,800
FY77*	
Corrosion Control Wash Rack	
Crash Fire Station—7,232 SF	
Structural Fire Station—3,000 SF	
Aircraft Ready Issue Refueler	
Shed Storage—7,100 SF	
Fleet Recreation Pavillion—6,000 SF	
Outdoor Recreation	
Public Works Shops—16,570 SF	
Flammable Storage—2,670 SF	
Chapel Addition	
Club Addition—2,774 SF	
Hobby Shop Addition—1,500 SF	
Navy Exchange Warehouse—5,400 SF	
Special Services Issue & Office—1,580 SF	
Theater—3,500 SF	
Library Addition—2,500 SF	
Education Center—4,124 SF	
Sub Total	\$ 5,900
Total	37,800

* FY 76 and FY 77 projects are subject to price growth due to inflation. Current estimates are based upon FY 76 price projections.

contingency situation for a period of about 30 days in the absence of any external sources of supply. In a world of great economic and political uncertainty, that margin of time could mean the difference between an orderly, efficient resupply of U.S. forces and a hasty, ad hoc, expensive operation requiring a significant diversion of support assets from other areas.

Thus, in addition to the increased operational flexibility which we would acquire from enlarged support facilities on Diego Garcia, we would in effect be buying a measure of immunity from events such as those in October 1973, when local supply sources were severed.

In an area as important as the Indian Ocean, where over half the world's seaborne oil is in transit at any given moment, I believe the necessity for the United States to be able to operate its forces securely and independently is self-evident.



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 Telephone: (202) OXford 4-5070
 Autovon 224-5070

