

Western Europe is perhaps the least likely of the military emergencies that NATO may face. However improbable a more limited attack may be, it is less mind-boggling to envisage small-scale fighting associated with political change and tension on the East-West frontier. For such contingencies the tactical nuclear weapon is the least appropriate instrument. It seems clear, therefore, that too much of NATO's time, personnel, and planning now go into tactical nuclear weapons which are largely unusable except as an *in*

*terrorem* device.

The number of tactical nuclear weapons now deployed in Europe should be substantially reduced. We should begin now to consult in NATO about how many of these weapons should continue to be deployed, of what type and where. In the long run, these changes may increase the deterrent impact on the Soviet Union, rather than decreasing it. A military posture that lacks reality is less formidable than one which, though more austere, carries greater logic. ■

# An Island Paradise for the Admirals

---

by Gene LaRocque

---

We are at a crucial point in the evolution of U. S. policy toward the Indian Ocean. The proposal to build a naval and air base on the island of Diego Garcia where there is today only a limited communications facility requires the most rigorous examination and searching questioning.

Until very recently, U. S. policy toward the Indian Ocean was, with some exceptions such as the dangerous "tilting" exercise in gunboat diplomacy during the India-Pakistan war in 1971, sound and reasonable, one of restraint and constrained military presence. This was in recognition of the fact that the U. S. has no vital interests at stake in the region and that U. S. security interests there are comparatively limited. Overall U. S. objectives and the well-being and security of the countries of the region were best achieved through economic

and diplomatic means.

The position of the State Department was expressed in 1971 by David Abshire, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations: "U. S. security interests in the Indian Ocean region are quite limited." In May 1973, Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs, observed that "the subcontinent is very far away. I think our interests are marginal. I think the Nixon doctrine is quite applicable—namely, we ourselves don't want to become involved."

The construction of an austere communications facility at Diego Garcia was approved by Congress after constant Administration reassurances that it would be no more than a communications facility. Less than a year ago, James Noyes of the Defense Department assured Congress that "there are no plans to transform this facility into something from which forces could be projected, or that

---

*Gene LaRocque, Rear Admiral Ret. USN, is director of the Center for Defense Information.*

would provide a location for the basing of ships and aircraft.”

The U. S. Navy, however, has long had different ideas. The Navy dream has been to inherit the British Imperial legacy “East of Suez.” Plans for moving into the Indian Ocean date back to the early 1960s and even before. The first prerequisite to an expanded U. S. naval presence was a series of radio and communications facilities to handle increased naval traffic. Diego Garcia was added to the network extending from Asmara, Ethiopia to the Northwest Cape of Australia.

The next step is developing a supply and repair base in the Indian Ocean. This is where we now find ourselves: the Defense Department is asking Congress for \$29 million in the 1974 supplemental bill and an additional \$3.3 million in the fiscal 1975 budget, and it wants this money to start making Diego Garcia into a supply base.

Strictly speaking, this is not the first money for such purposes. Under the guise of funding for the existing “very austere” communications facility, the Navy has already received \$6 million in fiscal 1973 for dredging the Diego Garcia harbor to create a turning basin 2,000 feet wide and 6,000 feet long to accommodate submarines and aircraft carriers. The existing 8,000-foot runway can handle most aircraft, the design aircraft being the huge C-141 cargo airplane.

Future improvements on the harbor, runway, and re-fueling and support facilities will go a long way toward making the base at Diego Garcia similar to the one at Subic Bay in the Philippines. Those who may doubt that this is the Navy’s intention—that is, those who believe official statements that Defense is “not aware of any plans to ask for more money”—should examine the record of how, despite assurances to the contrary, year by year the Defense Department’s requests and plans have expanded as the camel’s nose has been pushed further and further under the

tent. As far as the Navy is concerned, the austere communications facility on Diego Garcia was simply a convenient way-station on the road to something bigger and better.

The line that will be used to sell the permanent base is “The Russians Are Coming.” As Admiral Zumwalt said recently, “Their tentacles are going out like an octopus into the Indian Ocean.” Does the threat warrant the steps which are being proposed? The conclusion I draw from a look at a broad range of factors is that the U. S. Navy is exaggerating both the Soviet Naval threat in the Indian Ocean and our own weaknesses.

Misleading presentations of comparative Soviet and U. S. naval activity in the Indian Ocean are very common. One of the most misleading is the number of “ship-days” spent by naval vessels of the two countries in the Indian Ocean. Ship-day totals are the number of ships in the ocean multiplied by the number of days they spend there. In 1971, for example, the Soviet Union is said to have accumulated 3,149 ship-days versus 1,350 for the U. S. It is important, first, to remember that most of the Russian ships are non-combatants—oilers, oceanographic vessels, and the like. Moreover, the data on port calls tell a different story than those on ship-days. Port calls are perhaps a more accurate indication of impact and influence in the region. In 1971 Soviet naval combatants and auxiliaries made 33 port calls to seven states in the region. The U. S. Navy made 157 port calls to 20 states in the Indian Ocean region in 1971. Part of the explanation for the discrepancy is that the Soviet naval units tend to spend much of their time at open sea anchorages, out of sight and perhaps out of mind of the people of the region.

The U. S. Navy helps to make up for this lack of publicity by providing the Soviet Navy with a lot of free advertising. Defense Secretary Schlesinger has said that *perceptions*

of military capabilities by third parties are as important as actual capabilities, yet his department keeps referring to the ominous Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean. If his reasoning about *perceptions* is true, the U. S. Navy should cease and desist from trumpeting the Soviet naval threat to the skies and running down U. S. capabilities. Overrating of the Soviet Union's naval strength in the Indian Ocean, or elsewhere, yields the Soviets unnecessary and undeserved political gains, particularly in third world countries.

The Soviet Navy lacks reliable and secure shore-based support facilities on the Indian Ocean. In fact, Soviet practice has been to rely primarily on its own auxiliary ships for fuel, provisions, and repairs. This is one of the reasons the Soviets have more naval ships in the region. The Soviet Navy, as does the U. S. Navy, has access to ports and facilities in a number of countries, but the use of these facilities does not confer base rights or convert them into Soviet naval bases. Now, on Diego Garcia, the United States is building a naval support base, essentially under its own control, in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet Union is not. Is this necessary?

Even now, the United States has a substantial advantage over the Soviet Union in its ability to support naval forces overseas without an extensive network of foreign bases. Nuclear-powered naval surface ships—which the Russians do not have—are especially useful for extended deployments; the United States has a total of 14 of these ships in action or already funded. The U. S. also has more oilers, repair ships, and underway replenishment ships and can sustain a fleet at sea without shore facilities better than the Soviet Union.

The probable reopening of the Suez Canal—which would permit more Soviet ships to enter the Indian Ocean—has increased the pressure for a U. S. naval build-up in the area. I am skeptical that the Soviets have many ships that they can afford to take

from higher priority regions for use in the less important Indian Ocean. In any case, we should try to reach agreements about controlling military traffic through the Suez Canal before setting firmly on the path toward a naval arms race.

The U. S. Navy has the capability to move into the Indian Ocean in force from the Pacific and Atlantic on any necessary occasion. A support base at Diego Garcia makes sense only if we plan significantly *increased* deployments in the Indian Ocean. The need for this is very doubtful. The marginal benefits in efficiency would not compensate for the problems created.

One of the problems is the increased risk that a local conflict could turn into a confrontation between the two superpowers. Examples would be hostility between India and Pakistan, or between Iran and some of its neighbors such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia. With more U. S. and Soviet naval forces on hand, involvement by the two powers would be all the more likely. Some countries in the area fear that they will be dragged into superpower conflicts. Our search for influence in the region can quickly be transformed into compulsion to defend the positions and privileges we obtain; and the privileges soon become national security imperatives.

Three years ago hearings on the Indian Ocean were held by another Foreign Affairs subcommittee. The State Department witness on that occasion was Ronald Spiers, director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs. Spiers cogently summed up a restrained U. S. policy toward the Indian Ocean which is just as sound today as it was then:

There appears to be no requirement at this time for us to feel impelled to control, or even decisively influence, any part of the Indian Ocean or its littoral given the nature of our interest there and the current level of Soviet and Chinese involvement. We consider, on balance, that our present interests are served by normal commercial, political, and military access. ■

# Tidbits and Outrages

## The Taxpayers' Postage

Congressman Morris Udall recently admitted in a letter to his colleagues that "when the new Congressional franking bill was enacted in December, a staff error resulted in an unintended change in the printed material appearing on franked envelopes now being produced." These postage-free envelopes used to simply bear the Member's signature. The staff error resulted in the phrase "Postage paid by Congress" appearing under the facsimile signature. But Rep. Udall reassured his colleagues, "I'm happy to report that the House committee on the Post Office and Civil Service today added a repealer of this unfortunate goof to a Senate-passed bill, S. 2315, and that the bill is expected to be on the next Consent Calendar.

"Members who are concerned about using envelopes with the new language might consider withholding orders for new supplies of franked envelopes for a few days until the repealer can be signed into law.

"I personally regret this error and any difficulty it might have caused."

S. 2315, as amended, passed the House by unanimous consent March 4 and the Senate March 19. It is reassuring to know that our Congress is capable of rapid action in genuine emergencies.

## Survival of the Fittest

In his forthcoming book, *Judges*, Donald Dale Jackson quotes J. Sam Perry of Illinois on how he got his federal judgeship:

"I gambled," he said. "I saw a man—Paul Douglas—who looked as though he might be elected to the Senate. I backed him, and as a result I had his support. . . . I tried to obtain the appointment once before and learned that it requires not one but two senators. . . . I was out of politics and they did not need me. I decided I had better get back into politics, which I did. I learned that everyone shoots at the number-one choice, so I told each of the senators not to make me first. . . . That proved to be pretty good strategy everybody else was shot off and, no use lying about it, I helped to shoot them off. The result was I landed on top."

## Layettes Come First

Another illustration of the idealism rampant among government employees comes from the American Foreign Service Association, which describes as one of its two major achievements of the month getting the State Department to agree to

(1) A substantial liberalization in the Supplementary Post Allowance, which will permit payment of the allowance to all family members. Once implemented, this should make transition to life at a new post substantially less costly.

(2) Undertake a thoroughgoing study of the wardrobe section of the Foreign Transfer Allowance. We had indicated that the allowances for inter-zonal transfers were woefully inadequate. Following the study, the Department has indicated that it intends to include this question in funding requests for FY-76.

(3) A substantial liberalization in Educational Travel, reducing the period dependent children must spend at post while on educational travel from 45 to 21 days.

(4) A major increase of roughly 50 percent in the maximum payments for certain categories of property on which there are claims of property losses. AFSA had argued that since the overall maximum payment had been increased, and in light of substantial inflation, the subcategory limits should also be raised. The Department also agreed to circularize information notifying employees of the provision of the regulations which permits advanced payment of claims in cases involving substantial personal hardship.

(5) Shipment of layettes. The Department has already agreed last August in principle to shipment of American-style layettes for newly-born children when these were unavailable locally. We disagreed, however, on the exact amount of the allowance. We have now settled on 160 lbs.