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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

July 5, 1977

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT THE WHITE HOUSE

SUBJECT: The Moscow Talks on the Indian Ocean, June 22-27

Pursuant to the agreement reached last March between Secretary Vance and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko to begin discussing the possibility of US-Soviet arms limitation arrangements in the Indian Ocean, our delegation met in Moscow with the Soviet delegation on June 22-27. The primary objective, in accordance with your instructions, was to see if the Soviets were seriously interested in limiting military capabilities in the Indian Ocean, and to express our own interest in establishing a process that would stabilize the situation and pave the way for subsequent reduction.

I conclude from our Moscow meetings that the Soviets are serious, and are interested in negotiating an agreement. They did not seek to score propaganda points; they agreed in principle that our respective levels of military presence in the Indian Ocean are low enough so that we can realistically hope to avoid a competitive buildup.

However, the Soviets set forth a maximalist position which may foreshadow an extended negotiation. They clearly see the current situation in the Indian Ocean as favoring the U.S. and want to assure that arms control arrangements produce what they describe as "equal security".

The Soviet position appears to be aimed primarily at heading off a U.S. strategic capability in the Indian Ocean. Specifically, they are concerned by the U.S. potential to deploy ballistic missile submarines and strategic bombers in the area. They also contend that our carrier-based aircraft in some parts of the area could attack their territory with nuclear weapons,

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and should, thus, implicitly be equated with the forward-based systems (FBS), of which they have made an issue in SALT. In that light, the Soviets suggested that we eliminate and/or ban from the region elements they consider to be strategic and freeze and reduce the other elements of our forces.

The Soviets also expressed concern over what they perceive to be a U.S. military build-up athwart a sea-route which is vital to them but not to us. They profess to see Diego Garcia as the primary expression of both the existing and latent U.S. threat. They argue that it is the control of bases, not the use of bases, which confers significant military advantage. They argue further that an agreement should "take into account" the presence of Allied forces and facilities in the Indian Ocean and the presence of U.S. and Allied forces and facilities in areas adjacent to the Indian Ocean, such as Subic Bay.

Despite the broad difference in the two positions, there emerged a number of points of agreement:

- the talks and any agreement will be bilateral.
- the talks will be confidential, although the parties will of course discuss progress privately with Allies (and we stated our intention to have similar discussions with other concerned nations).
- with forces on both sides at relatively low levels, now is the time to prevent a military competition.
- the parties will require an agreed measurement for ship presence--probably a combination of ship-days and ton-days.
- ships transiting the Indian Ocean directly will be excluded from limits.

Differences on what constitutes the Indian Ocean for the purposes of negotiation were narrowed and we are close to agreement on a definition of the area.

The Soviets had obviously thought through the issues and were well prepared for the meeting. However, although repeatedly citing what they regard as unilateral U.S. advantages (noted above), they took an essentially serious and moderate line. They agreed that both sides have legitimate interests in the Indian Ocean area. They noted their need for transit and communication between European Russia and the Soviet Far East; and they

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acknowledged our legitimate interest in protecting access to the oil resources of the Persian Gulf. The Soviets appear to be staking a claim for compensation based on the presence in the area of Allied, especially French and CENTO forces and facilities, and, of course, our durable access to Diego Garcia. However, on most issues involving regional considerations, the Soviets showed some willingness to be flexible and, to a degree, some responsiveness to the essentials of our position.

On balance, the Soviet position, at least as it emerged in the meetings, was reasonably encouraging and showed a clear interest in reaching agreement. Although showing flexibility on the nature of an agreement, the Soviets indicated a preference for combining with a freeze on some elements, a reduction of others--presumably ours--and a ban on still other--exclusively U.S.--elements.

In response to their line on strategic systems, we said that we would not single out specific weapons systems and types of systems for special treatment. We indicated, however, that strategic systems would be subject to limits under any stabilization agreement that was concluded, thus going some way toward meeting their concerns.

In accordance with your guidance to me, we suggested notification of ship arrival and departures and told them that we were prepared at a later stage to discuss the issue of land-based aircraft. We also made clear that we would not consider any proposal that sought to take the presence of Allies into account in establishing limits; and we rejected just as categorically the Soviet argument that U.S. presence in adjacent areas should be taken into account. We indicated willingness to consider limiting some activities at Diego Garcia (excepting specifically communications), but only within the framework of a broad agreement which also limited Soviet use of shore facilities.

The next US-Soviet meeting

When we hold the next session, probably in late September, we should have a clear idea of the goal toward which we want to move these talks. Although we could, or course, continue only to exchange views, my feeling is that the ground has been adequately covered and that we ought now to develop a clear position. By September, the Soviets will probably be prepared to make a proposal, possibly in the form of a draft agreement. To the degree possible, I think we should try to hold the initiative. Therefore, consideration should be given to development of a U.S. proposal, which could be presented at the next

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session to be held either in Washington or in Moscow. If you approve, I will arrange with Dr. Brzezinski to have the SCC working group on the Indian Ocean begin work on an options paper for consideration by the SCC sometime in August.



Paul C. Warnke

cc: The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Director, Central Intelligence Agency  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs

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