

31 Dec 71

American people are misled

New Orleans States-Item

31 Dec 71

about India-Pakistan war

WASHINGTON — Throughout the Indian-Pakistani War, the American people once again were misled by their leaders.

Secret documents dispute, for example, the White House explanation for dispatching a naval task force to the Bay of Bengal.

Official spokesmen emphasized that the task force's main mission was to evacuate American citizens from embattled Dacca.

We have studied the secret White House papers dealing with the two-week war. These make clear that the task force —

Jack Anderson

including the aircraft carrier Enterprise, the most powerful ship in the Navy — was sent into Indian waters as a "show of force."

This provocative naval deployment was intended (1) to compel India to divert both ships and planes to shadow the task force; (2) to weaken India's blockage against East Pakistan; (3) possibly to divert the Indian aircraft carrier Vikrami from its military mission; and (4) to force India to keep planes on defense alert, thus reducing their operations against Pakistani ground troops.

A secondary mission

The evacuation of American citizens was strictly a secondary mission, adopted more as the justification than the reason for the naval move.

Here's how the "Top Secret" orders to the task force were finally worded: "Situation: U.S. citizens may have to be evacuated from the area affected by the present India-Pakistan conflict. The situation may also arise which will require the presence and utilization of a CVA (carrier) to ensure the protection of U.S. interests in the area. . .

"Mission: to form a contingency evacuation force capable of helo (helicopter) evacuation of civilians, of self-protection, and of conducting naval air and surface ops (operations) as directed by higher authority in order to support U.S. interests in the Indian Ocean area."

Meanwhile, those anonymous aides, who whisper the latest word from the White House into the ears of newsmen, have stooped pretending that the task force was intended to evacuate stranded Americans.

Now the aides are leaking the story that President Nixon had learned of the Soviet-Indian plans not only to lop off East Pakistan but to dismember West Pakistan. The task force was ordered into the Indian Ocean, according to this line, as a deterrent.

But this, too, is a distortion of the information contained in the White House papers. Here are excerpts from the "Secret Sensitive" strategy session that took place in the White House's fabled Situation Room shortly

before the decision to present a "show of force" in the Bay of Bengal:

"Mr. Helms (the CIA chief) opened the meeting by briefing the current situation . . . It is reported that prior to terminating present hostilities, Mrs. Gandhi intends to attempt to eliminate Pakistan's armor and air force capabilities. . .

"Assessing the situation in the West, General Ryan (the Air Force chief) indicated that he did not see the Indians pushing too hard at this time, rather they seem to be content with a holding action . . .

"Dr. Kissinger (the President's chief foreign policymaker) suggested that . . . if the Indians smash the Pak air force and the armored forces, we would have a deliberate Indian attempt to force the disintegration of Pakistan. The elimination of the Pak armored and air forces would make the Paks defenseless.

Scare tactics

"It would turn West Pakistan into a client state. The possibility elicits a number of questions. Can we allow a U.S. ally to go down completely? Can we allow the Indians to scare us off? . . .

"Mr. Sisco (assistant state secretary in charge of Asian affairs) stated that if the situation were to evolve as Dr. Kissinger had indicated, then, of course, there was a serious risk to West Pakistan. Mr. Sisco doubted, however, that the Indians had this as their objective. . .

"Dr. Kissinger stated that what we may be witnessing is a situation wherein a country (India), equipped and supported by the Soviets, may be turning half of Pakistan into an impotent state and the other half into a vassal . . . One could make a case, he argued, that we have done everything two weeks too late in the current situation.

"Mr. Packard (deputy Defense secretary) stated that perhaps the only satisfactory outcome would be for us to stand fast, with the expectation that the West Paks could hold their own . . .

'India is the attacker'

"Dr. Kissinger said that we are not trying to be even-handed. The President does not want to be even-handed. The President believes that India is the attacker. . .

"Dr. Kissinger said that we cannot afford to ease India's state of mind. 'The lady' is cold blooded and tough and will not turn into a Soviet satellite merely because of pique. We should not ease her mind. He invited anyone who objected to this approach to take his case to the President."

Next day, preparations were made to send a task force into the Bay of Bengal to confront both Soviet and Indian warships.