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Justifying Diego Garcia

Something has gone wrong with the administration's game plan for Diego Garcia. CIA Director William Colby broke ranks and qualified the arguments of the Pentagon—particularly those of the recently retired chief of naval operations, Adm. Elmo Zumwalt—which sought to justify the need for America's first Indian Ocean naval and air base because the Russians either already were around or certain to come.

In presenting the case before Congress, Adm. Zumwalt and Adm. Thomas Moorer, recently retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had marched up to the Hill with those trustworthy old persuaders, the large-scale maps heavily rouged in red to dramatize the Soviet areas of penetration. But Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), who gained x-ray military vision as President Truman's Secretary of the Air Force and who uniquely straddles seats on both the Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees,

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had doubts. He summoned Colby to testify before allowing his Senate military construction subcommittee to proceed on the Navy's request for \$29 million for the initial expansion of the Diego Garcia project. And since only two fellow senators showed up to listen, Symington persuaded Colby that it would be in the public interest for him to sanitize his testimony and permit as much as possible to be printed in the Congressional Record.

In contrast to the admirals' red maps of the Indian Ocean area, Colby had his own way of dramatizing:

Socotra, in the Chagos Archipelago: "A bare island. There is almost nothing there except for a small garrison from South Yemen . . . The only air strip is an old World War II air strip

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which is really not feasible for modern operations."

Berbera, in Somalia: "A small installation which will handle two or three ships . . . They (the Soviets) have been building an airstrip there for about a year, but have not gotten very far."

Mogadiscio, Somalia's capital: "The area within the breakwater is somewhat shallow water . . . There is an airfield about 30 to 40 miles northwest . . . which they (the Soviets) have been gradually building up a little bit. But there is not much progress on that either."

Umm Qasr, in Iraq: "The so-called port is about four, five or six buildings here, a place where you can anchor. It is a little complicated to get through the delta down to the (Persian) Gulf. The Iraqis appear to be a little bit restrictive as to the degree to which they will allow the Soviets free use of this particular port."

Aden: "The Soviets have not used it very much. They have not done much more than port visits there . . . (The airfield has) a short runway, not big enough to handle the TU-16s and larger aircraft."

Singapore: "The Soviets have bunkered there. Singapore sells to whoever happens to go by."

Mauritius: "Port Louis is a very good port. It is not all that highly developed . . . They have sold bunkering to the Soviets."

Adm. Zumwalt, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Near East and South Asia subcommittee on March 20, almost four months before Colby, used different binoculars.

Socotra: A Soviet "fleet anchorage" and an airfield which "provides a po-

tential Soviet base for reconnaissance or other aircraft."

Berbera: A Soviet "communications station . . . a restricted area . . . combined barracks and repair ship and housing for Soviet military dependents."

Mogadiscio: The Soviets are building "a new military airfield . . . which could be used for a variety of missions."

Umm Qasr: Soviet-assisted facilities "considerably more extensive than any which would be required for Iraqi needs alone."

Aden: Extended Soviet "port facilities [and] air facilities which are used for refueling, replenishment and minor repairs."

Singapore and Mauritius: Places where "the Soviets have recently secured bunkering rights."

Summarizing, the CIA director testified: "Our assessment is that you will see a gradual increase in Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean area, that if there is some particular American increase, that the Soviets will increase that gradually to match any substantial additional American involvement . . ."

Sen Symington then asked: "You expect the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean to continue to grow regardless of what we do, but that it will grow faster if we start developing Diego Garcia?"

Colby: "I think that is true, yes sir."

Until now the House has gone along with the Pentagon's desire to build up Diego Garcia, but the Senate has shown some hesitation. Senate concurrence now may hinge on how many senators find time to read their Congressional Record of Aug. 1.