

7th Fleet Task Force Ends Patrol in the Indian Ocean

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NYTimes By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 10 — of Indian-American relations.

The United States Navy task force led by the nuclear-powered carrier Enterprise sailed out of the Indian Ocean today after a month of patrol duty begun during the Indian Pakistani war, the Defense Department announced.

The return of the nine-ship squadron to regular service with the Seventh Fleet in Southeast Asian waters ended a controversial aspect of United States actions during the war on the subcontinent.

The presence of the task force in the Indian Ocean was never fully explained by the Nixon Administration. Because of Washington's condemnation of Indian actions during the war, many Indians looked upon the task force as a provocation, a view that set off anti-American demonstrations, an official Indian protest and a worsening

Pentagon sources and secret cablegrams made public by the syndicated columnist Jack Anderson indicated that the carrier force had at least three objectives; possible evacuation of Americans, showing the flag in view of the presence of Soviet naval forces in the area and deterring India from any thought of extending the war to West Pakistan once East Pakistan fell.

Course Changed After Truce

The task force entered the Indian Ocean on Dec. 14 in the direction of East Pakistan, but after the cease-fire on Dec. 17, the ships changed course and patrolled at a distance.

Last Friday, when asked how long the task force would remain in the Indian Ocean, Jerry W. Friedheim, the Defense Department spokesman, declined to give an exact time, stressing that the United States intended to send units of the Seventh Fleet into the Indian Ocean from time to time, now that Britain was withdrawing from the area.

That statement was seen as an assertion of principle that the United States did not intend to leave the Indian Ocean to the Russians, who normally have a squadron of 10 to 12 ships there.

Today, Mr. Friedheim said that at 6:30 A.M. Eastern standard time, the task force had cleared the Malacca Strait and

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