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New Horizons

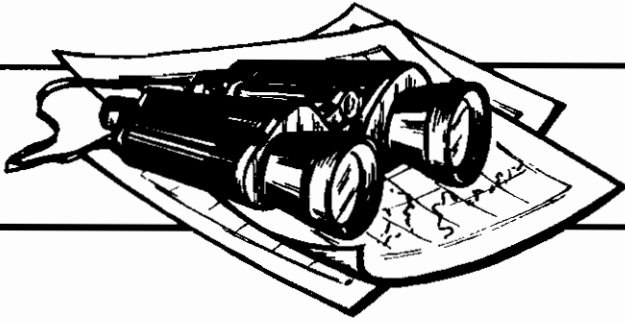
R. M. Laske
U.S. Navy

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NEW HORIZONS

(This new section of the *Naval War College Review* has been established in a further effort to stimulate imaginative thinking on the problems facing the Navy and the nation. "New Horizons," which will appear periodically in the *Review*, will serve as a vehicle for short articles embodying ideas and concepts currently under study and research at the Naval War College. They are offered not as finished products of research, but as essays to stimulate discussion and comment and therefore do not reflect in any way the official position of the Naval War College or the Navy Department, Ed.)

AN INDIAN OCEAN ANZUS SQUADRON

By the end of 1971 the British naval presence, which has dominated the Indian Ocean basin for over a century, will cease to exist. This withdrawal will leave in its wake a power vacuum alarmingly similar to that created in the Middle East by the removal of British land forces from Palestine. The nations east of Suez, many of them newly independent, militarily weak, and politically unstable, will be exposed to the dual peril of internal turmoil and external pressure--particularly from Communist nations.

A nuclear menace posed by Communist China would increase enormously the pressures for nuclear proliferation, particularly in the case of India, which has so far foresworn nuclear weapons. Some U.S. allies--specifically Thailand--are already visibly nervous over U.S. intentions when the Vietnam conflict is finally ended.

The prospect of a possible U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia, coupled with that of a Red China internally stable and capable of moving aggressively on the international scene, is as

threatening as it is plausible. Red China will be free to look afar--particularly at the attractive potential of the many countries bordering the Indian Ocean. To this may be added the clear demonstrations of Russian interest and intentions in the region. Soviet naval vessels based as far away as Murmansk and Vladivostok already roam the vicinity, despite logistics problems made more complex by the closing of the Suez Canal. All indications are that the U.S.S.R. now plans to replace the British as the major naval power, with a permanent force in being, in the Indian Ocean area.

It is possible that the United States might determine to maintain a substantial permanent naval force in the area to counter such a Russian challenge. But the clear trend in foreign policy thinking in the United States would appear to lead away from any further overseas involvement and "entangling" commitments even to old areas of responsibility, much less to a new area such as the Indian Ocean. The statement has repeatedly been made, "The United States should not be the unilateral policeman of the world." Moreover, the

cost of maintaining a balanced force of any size in that area would be eminently unpopular in the aftermath of the expensive Vietnam experience.

And yet let us consider for a moment the potential consequences which could ensue if the free world were to abdicate from the Indian Ocean. In the Mediterranean the U.S.S.R. has pursued a manifold strategy combining a substantial naval presence (complete with amphibious capabilities), military and economic aid to selected states, and overt political support for local nationalist causes. The result has been that Syria, the U.A.R., and Algeria are now palpably contained in the sphere of Soviet influence. Might not the policy which has functioned so admirably in the northern tier of Africa meet with equal success in littoral East Africa, in the Red Sea, in the Persian Gulf, and even in those chief prizes of South Asia-India and Pakistan? The circumstances which might lead to enlarged Soviet influence are not difficult to imagine.

In 1964 the British commando carrier H.M.S. *Centaur* was cruising with two destroyers off the coast of East Africa when a message was received from the Ministry of Defense in London—"Capture the Tanzanian Army." The army had mutinied, and President Nyerere had asked the British for help. Only hours later *Centaur* was off Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital. By the following nightfall, *Centaur's* commando forces of Royal Marines which had been lifted ashore by helo had completed their mission. The commanding officer was able to dispatch the message—"Tanzanian Army captured; in barracks." In 1972, with the British replaced by a Soviet presence, to whom will a desperate East African president or premier be likely to apply for assistance?

Under these circumstances the question is raised as to how the challenge can be met—to avoid leaving this broad area, one seventh of the world's surface,

to Russian (and possibly Communist Chinese) domination. Specifically, how could the British military presence be replaced with a substitute free world force?

The following three factors would seem to be inherent in any solution involving the United States:

a. It must be clearly based on a solid international partnership.

b. It must be established on an equitable cost-sharing basis that would not impose inordinate expenses on the United States.

c. It must be flexible enough to permit partner nations to detach and operate unilaterally where necessity requires.

One proposal which would seem to meet the case is the establishment of a squadron combined of United States, Australian, and possibly New Zealand components with the express purpose of cruising the region at issue. For purposes of this discussion it is assumed that New Zealand would support the establishment of this squadron but would not actively participate because of limited forces available.

The force would comprise an attack type aircraft carrier, provided by the United States, and two escort destroyers and an oiler furnished by the Royal Australian Navy, all to be homeported somewhere in Western Australia—possibly at Fremantle. The carrier need not be a modern CVA; it would fully suffice to remove from mothballs a ship of the *Hancock* class and equip and man it for multiple purposes, perhaps with the designation CVM. Its air group might be composed of two attack squadrons, a defensive fighter-interceptor squadron, an augmented troop helo squadron, and suitable auxiliary aircraft. A reinforced company of marines, transportable by helicopter, would also be aboard with their supporting arms and equipment. The carrier would be U.S. manned; the escorts and oiler would be RAN manned. The

squadron commodore and staff in the carrier would be bi-national with a U.S. flag officer in command and with an Australian Chief of Staff.

If the need ever arose, it would be perfectly feasible at short notice to remove the Australian personnel from the carrier to allow unilateral action by either country. This capability would always exist, even though all regular missions would be undertaken on the basis of full concurrence between the two nations involved.

At the economical speed of 17 knots, the Anzus Squadron could leave Fremantle and in 40 days visit, for example, Tamatave in the Malagasy Republic, Mombasa in Kenya, Jidda, Karachi, and Bombay. Without appreciably extending the cruise time, under-way visits could be scheduled to several other ports as politico-military expedients demanded. With five cruisers a year, the squadron could make an appearance in a port or off the coast of every nation in the Indian Ocean basin, stopping several times annually at key points. In contingency situations the force would be positioned as necessary to meet the need.

Cost sharing would be inherent to the bi-national concept of the Anzus Squadron: operating costs to the United States would be limited to those relating to the carrier. Australia, which would support all expenses incurred by her own naval units, might reasonably partially offset any gold flow problem associated with U.S. personnel and dependents living there with compensatory purchases in the United States.

Moreover, those costs which the United States would have to bear could be minimized in several ways. The re-commissioned carrier would involve only standard operational costs of personnel, current ship maintenance, and fuel. In the light of the squadron's mission, its aircraft could well be taken from obsolescent existing stocks scheduled for replacement, rather than new,

high performance, expensive models. The RAN oiler would provide for under-way fueling. Currently available 7th Fleet replenishment forces—perhaps rendezvousing with the U.S. carrier in the Malacca Straits or Bay of Bengal area on each of its five cruises—should be ample to supplement the main logistic support of Australian Navy shore activities. Spare parts and technical support could be provided through the line of communication (LOC) between CONUS and the Naval Communications Station, Harold E. Holt, at North West Cape, on the coast north of Fremantle.

Homeporting the squadron in Australia would obviate a backup carrier or carriers which would otherwise be needed for rotation—since short, periodic overhauls in an Australian shipyard might well keep the carrier almost continuously operational. These overhauls would be austere, without any expensive modernization being required. If after 2 or 3 years a major overhaul became necessary, the CVM could be temporarily relieved for the period necessary by another U.S. carrier due for decommissioning. No commissary or exchange facilities would be needed. The Australian economy should well suffice to meet the needs of U.S. personnel. The permanent, bi-national character of the mission would clearly be reinforced by Australian homeporting, since close personal relationships, mutual understanding, and friendly co-operation would be sure to result. This association with a Commonwealth country is particularly attractive for political and psychological reasons because 11 nations in the Indian Ocean are members of the Commonwealth. U.S. partnership with a major indigenous country of the area would make the U.S. permanent military representation there more acceptable than a U.S. unilateral presence.

The image of the Anzus Squadron could thus be projected as one of reassurance and goodwill, with the

ready capability for missions of peace-keeping and politico-military importance. It could stand off the East African coast in situations similar to the Congo, evacuating personnel as necessary with its large troop helicopters; when requested, it could come swiftly to the assistance of a government in distress as H.M.S. *Centaur* did in 1964; serving as a strike carrier/assault force, airfields could be seized and held for landbased air to arrive under extreme emergencies; it could be a "holding force" in some situations until major 7th Fleet or Strike Command forces might arrive on the scene; and, above all, the squadron could quietly demonstrate its flexible strength to states in need of reassurance by continuous visits throughout the region. Its nuclear retaliatory capacity could be dealt with in low key or not at all, as circumstances indicated.

In such a manner the power void created by the British withdrawal east of Suez could be decisively and permanently filled by free world powers without great expense to the United States and without the risk of accusa-

tions of imperialistic self-interest. External threats to indigenous countries would be effectively deterred and a stabilizing influence applied to the political and social turmoils of internal unrest so common in the area. The Anzus Squadron would represent a tangible, credible, friendly military presence to such Middle Eastern states as Iran and Saudi Arabia to counter any potential pressure from the U.A.R. or U.S.S.R. Threats of Chinese Communist nuclear blackmail would be effectively neutralized, lessening tension and ameliorating the climate for nonproliferation. And lastly, a constraining influence could be exerted on the perennial altercations between India and Pakistan.

There would appear to be many advantages and benefits in establishing an Indian Ocean Anzus Squadron. The only alternative might well be to offer an almost irresistible incentive to Russia or Communist China to step into the void created by the British withdrawal, unchallenged, and to relinquish the region to the instability which promises to plague it for a long time to come.

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Never tell people how to do things. Tell them *what* to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.

George S. Patton, Jr.: War As I Knew It
1947