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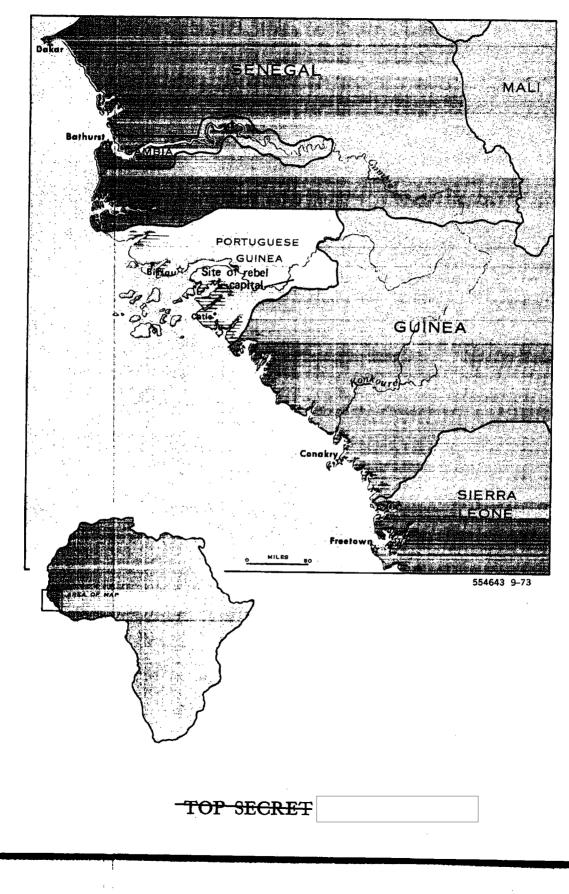
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PORTUGUESE GUINEA: The anti-Portuguese rebels have finally announced their long-planned declaration of an independent state of "Guinea-Bissau."

Earlier this week, a "national popular assembly" met inside the territory and proclaimed independence, adopted a constitution, and announced the leadership of their new government. According to a communiqué issued by the rebels' African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Luiz Cabral and Francisco Mendes, both major party figures, will serve as chief of state and head of government respectively. Aristides Pereira remains the head of the party. The rebels claim that their headquarters and capital will be located in a small town in southeastern Portuguese Guinea.

The PAIGC intends this move to bring political pressure on the Portuguese, who still exercise effective control over the important areas of Portuguese Guinea. The PAIGC hopes that a formal presence inside the territory and the achievement of wide diplomatic recognition will afford them an appearance of legitimacy and enable them to gain increased foreign economic and military assistance.

A PAIGC spokesman told US officials in Conakry, Guinea, that the new government is willing to talk with the Portuguese. In the past, Portugal has refused to talk with insurgents from any of its African territories. Lisbon is not now likely to change that policy and will continue to argue that the PAIGC does not have the support of the people of Portuguese Guinea.

The rebel government has been recognized by Yugoslavia, Romania, and a number of Arab and African states. Most other African and nonaligned nations are expected to follow suit. The Soviet Union, long a supporter of the PAIGC, has publicly welcomed the independence declaration and will almost certainly grant recognition now that some major African states have taken the lead. Other international reaction will become clearer when the Africans raise the question of Guinea-Bissau's status at the UN.

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