

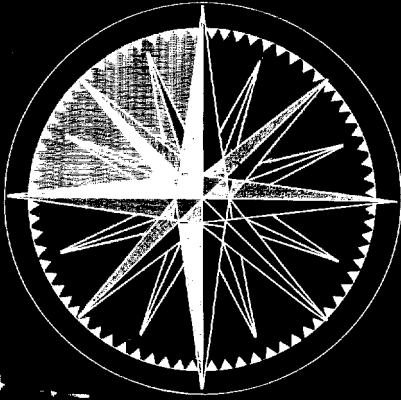
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# SPECIAL REPORT

FRENCH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAM IN THE PACIFIC

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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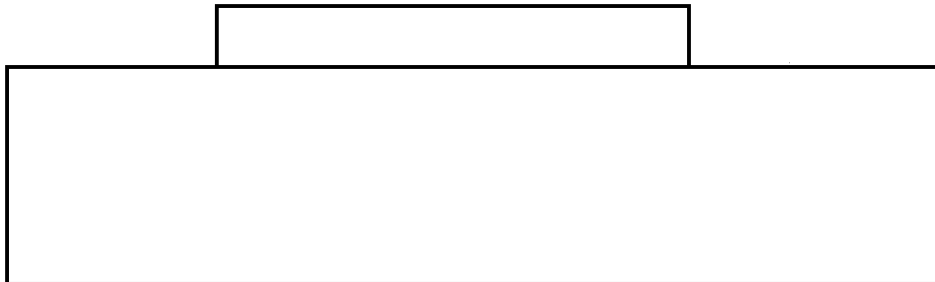


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### FRENCH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAM IN THE PACIFIC

France soon will begin atmospheric nuclear testing in the Pacific. The test site, under construction since 1963, is on Mururoa Atoll 650 miles southeast of Tahiti in French Polynesia.

The French have not yet announced a date for the initial Pacific test. The installation of instrumentation reportedly will be completed by the first week in June and testing could begin as early as the middle of the month. There has been speculation in the press that France might time its first test to coincide with De Gaulle's trip to Moscow on 20 June,

testing will begin in July, with the precise date chosen on the basis of short-range meteorological conditions.

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#### New Test Center

France is not a signatory of the Limited Test Ban Treaty, but since 1961 it has restricted its program to underground nuclear testing in the Sahara. Information obtainable only from atmospheric tests, however, has become increasingly important as France has moved forward with nuclear weapons development. Paris has long anticipated the need to resume atmospheric testing, and began some four years ago to look for a new test site. In 1963 the selection of French Polynesia was announced and construction began there the same year.

The agreement between France and Algeria permits use of the Sahara test center until mid-1967. However, the French now appear to be abandoning their Algerian facilities. Paris is unlikely to keep the Sahara test center in operation after testing begins in the Pacific.

#### Facilities in Polynesia

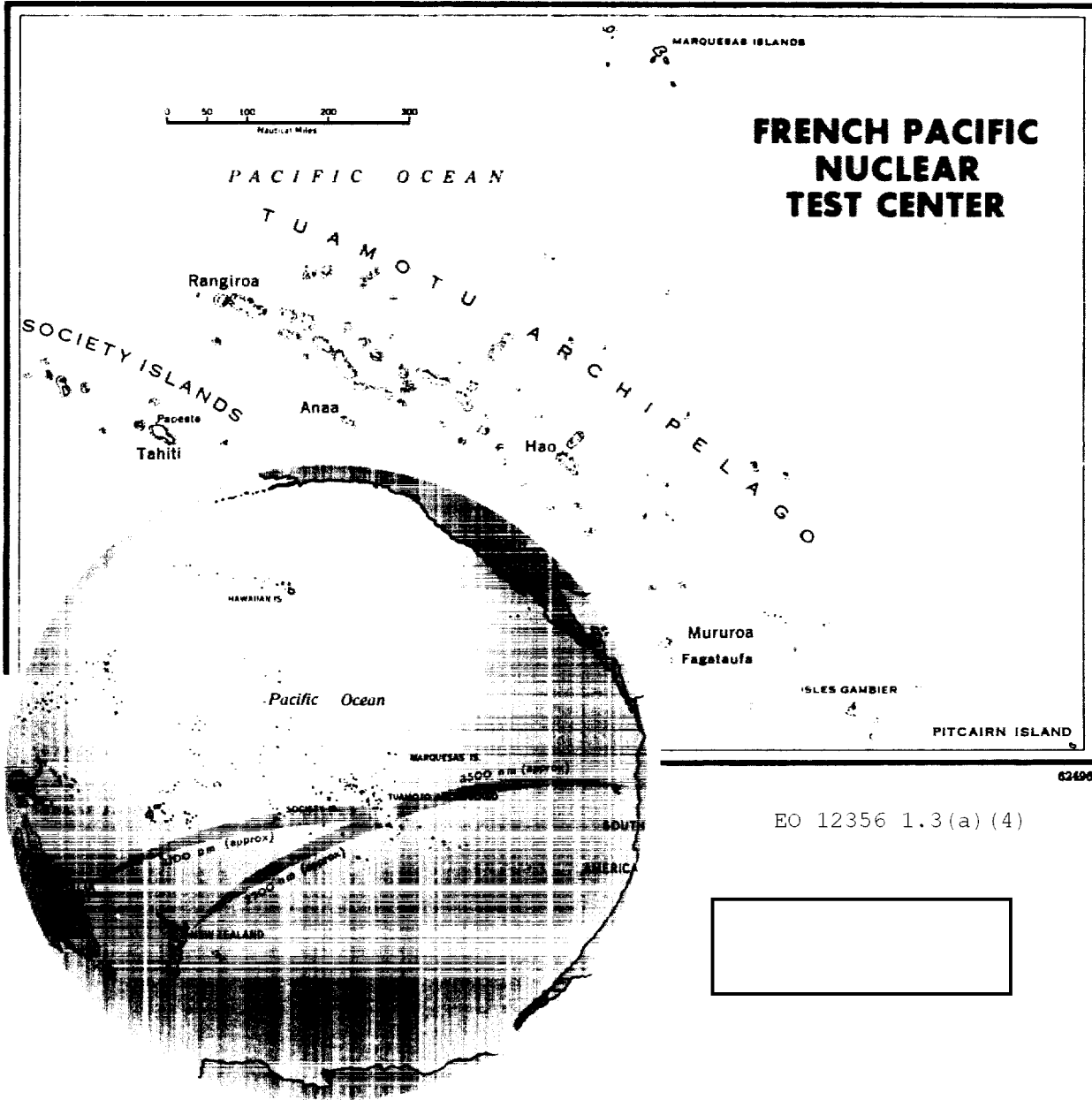
The Pacific test center consists of a rear support base at Tahiti, a forward support base at Hao, and test sites at Mururoa and Fagataufa atolls. Weather and instrumentation stations and emergency airfields are being built on islands throughout French Polynesia. Facilities at Tahiti, the capital of French Polynesia, are primarily for administration, logistics, and housing. Nuclear materials and other components for the test devices apparently are being delivered directly to Hao, where a harbor and airstrip have been built. The nuclear devices will be assembled there before delivery to Mururoa for testing. At Mururoa there is an airstrip, a support area, and two test sites. Fagataufa, a small atoll some 30 miles southeast of Mururoa, probably will be used as a high-yield test site later in the program.

#### Support Flights Over Panama

In early March, Panama granted overflight rights for

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French planes en route to the Polynesian test center. Since then, the French have made regular flights by this route, refueling at Pointe-a-Pitre, Guadeloupe. Nuclear material and components will probably be delivered from France to the Pacific by this route.

Program Burdens French Military

The geographic isolation of the Pacific test center has created complications in construction, manpower, and logistics and has resulted in higher costs than originally anticipated by the French. The cost of building and operating the test center through 1970 is estimated at 5.7 billion francs (US \$1.2 billion), some 40 percent higher than publicly authorized for the program.

The excess is largely made up of indirect support costs absorbed by the operating budgets of the armed forces and other ministries. Such "hidden expenses" have forced a reduction in the funds available for the purchase of conventional military equipment. The French Navy is particularly hard hit by the high priority of the nuclear test program, with nearly half of France's naval tonnage reportedly slated to support the Pacific tests.

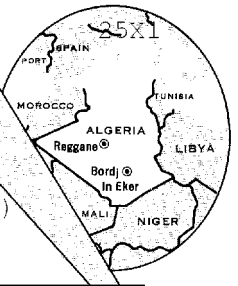
Radiation Danger Zones

On 17 May, Paris issued a warning to shipping and air traffic in anticipation of the impending test program at Mururoa. A circle with a radius of 120

**FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS IN ALGERIA**

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DATE FRENCH NO.

**ATMOSPHERIC TESTS AT REGGANE**

13 FEB 60	1
1 APR 60	2
27 DEC 60	3
25 APR 61	4

**UNDERGROUND TESTS AT BORDJ IN EKER**

7 NOV 61	5
1 MAY 62	6
18 MAR 63	7
30 MAR 63	8
20 OCT 63	9
14 FEB 64	10
15 JUN 64	11
28 NOV 64	12
27 FEB 65	13
30 MAY 65	14
1 OCT 65	15
1 DEC 65	16
16 FEB 66	17

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miles from the atoll was described as the prime danger zone for shipping. Air traffic was warned to stay at least 200 miles from the test site. Moreover, the French announced that the danger zone might be extended eastward as much as 400 miles, probably depending on winds at the time of each test.

World Opposition

World opposition to French atmospheric testing is unlikely to have any effect on De Gaulle's determination to carry out a full test program in the Pacific. The most vocal opposition to the forthcoming test series has come from Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and

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Colombia, all of which border on the Pacific some 4,000 miles from the test site. While westerly winds during much of the year would carry nuclear debris in the direction of South America, French testing is unlikely to cause any appreciable increase in radiation levels there.

France has announced that tests will take place only when winds are from the southwest, carrying nuclear debris clear of Pitcairn Island. Despite French assurances, that British dependency, only 300 miles southeast of the test site, stands in the greatest danger from the forthcoming test series.

### Test Objectives

The French are expected to conduct about six tests at Mururoa this year. For the first year or two Pacific tests probably will concentrate on an improved fission weapon to be used with France's Mirage IV bombers, on warheads for the French IRBM now under development, and on the

development of components for thermonuclear weapons. All of the early explosions are expected to have yields less than several hundred kilotons. (France's largest test so far, an underground explosion in Algeria, had a yield of 130 kilotons.)

At some point early in the Pacific test series the French probably will test an operational fission weapon under actual airdrop conditions. A Mirage IV bomber which overflew the US en route to the Pacific in mid-May will probably be used for the airdrop. Other tests will involve devices suspended from balloons or mounted on barges in Mururoa lagoon.

### The Program's Future

Later in the program the French will direct their test program toward a warhead for a submarine-launched ballistic missile and the development of a thermonuclear weapon.  
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