

NSC BRIEFING

12 March 1958

NORTH AFRICA (*long*)

- I. Latest French move is proposal for Western Mediterranean defense pact to include France, Spain, Italy, the UK, Morocco, Tunis and the "Algeria of tomorrow." Paris may, as additional come-on, propose French-Tunisian-Moroccan economic exploitation of the Sahara with a place in this scheme for Algeria.
  - A. Rabat and Tunis will almost certainly view these moves with great suspicion and will demand independence for Algeria as a prerequisite - a condition France will not accept.
  - B. Paris showing more flexibility on Tunisia and seems to be prepared to move the bulk of outlying French forces to Bizerte and to evacuate four or five thousand completely.
    1. However, Tunis unlikely to accept long-term French occupation of Bizerte.
    2. Finally, Gaillard still at mercy of ultra-nationalists who are likely to withdraw their support causing fall of government if Gaillard makes too many concessions.
  - C. Indications that North African and other problems may be influencing majority in French parliament and parties to toy with notion De Gaulle could be answer to French problems, especially Algeria.
    1. De Gaulle increasingly identified with idea of French-dominated federation embracing former North African protectorates and autonomous Algeria.

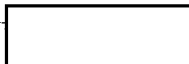
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2. De Gaulle has thus far insisted that he will come to power ~~legally~~ *only through legal means.*
- II. In North Africa most significant development is revival of the Maghreb (North African) Union of Tunisia, Morocco, independent Algeria, and possibly Libya. This has been publicly endorsed by Bourghuiba and King Mohamed.
    - A. An important reason is desire of King and Bourghuiba to counter Nasir's influence in the area.
    - B. Tunis and Rabat probably also hope this move will speed Algerian independence.
  - III. Algerian rebel upsurge continues, particularly near Tunisian border where rebels reported in control of countryside at night.
    - A. French have acknowledged nearly 400 of their troops killed in February - highest for any month of the rebellion.
    - B. French Defense Minister Chaban-Delmas told Murphy that he is pushing for a border no-mans land 20-25 miles wide and 300 miles long (this is probably not feasible).
      1. In Murphy's opinion Chaban-Delmas considers this an "open season" on Algerian Arabs.
  - IV. Paris has decided on a phased major reduction of their 40,000 ground troops in Morocco, leaving air and naval units.
    - A. Meanwhile, Rabat on verge of yielding to public demands for evacuation of French and Spanish troops.
      1. Although a small minority demands evacuation of US troops too, it is unlikely that Rabat will change its favorable attitude toward US presence over at least the short term.

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2. Rabat has also reiterated request that US prevent French use of Port Lyautay as entry point for material. US observes report French material buildup there.
- B. King's endorsement of Istiqlal Sahara claims has worsened relations with Spain and probably France.
- V. In Spanish Morocco fighting could break out again in southern border regions.
  - A. In view of Rabat's dispatch of troops to area, this might lead to clash between Morocco and Spain although neither side intends aggressive action.

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