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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

4 April 1952

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 216

SUBJECT: Suggested NIE on Nationalism in French North Africa and its Effect on US Strategic Interests.

1. We believe that present and potential US strategic interests in French North Africa and the probable impact on these interests of the rising tide of local nationalism in the area warrant an NIE on this subject. The native nationalist situation and outlook not only affect US interests in the area itself (especially in terms of potential US security problems there), but also affect the defense potential of certain of our allies, especially France, and our relations with the Moslem world.

2. In US strategic terms, North Africa represents: (a) a primary defensive line in the event of an early Soviet attack upon Western Europe; (b) a NATO flank defense; (c) a potential line of departure for counter-offensive purposes; (d) an important element in naval and air control of the Western Mediterranean; and (e) an important link in the belt of air bases for US strategic air attacks on the USSR. In conformance with these strategic interests, the US is developing a substantial naval, air, and ground base program in North Africa. This program is well under way in Morocco and to a lesser extent in Algeria, but the program for Tunisian bases has been delayed by French reluctance to grant permission for military survey teams to enter the area, and, more recently, by the unsettled Tunisian situation itself. Military negotiations with Spain may, in due course, cover the question of Spanish Moroccan bases.

3. While direct US economic interest in North Africa is small, the area is of considerable economic as well as military importance to France as a reservoir of manpower and a final redoubt, and for its economic contribution, actual and potential, to the metropole.

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4. We believe that the NIE on North Africa should assess primarily the growing nationalist movements in the area, their probable future development, their already evident international repercussions, and their immediate and long-range significance to US interests. It should also assess (drawing largely on NIE-63) the probable French reaction to this nationalist problem and probable French ability to cope with it. The growing conflict between French policy and local nationalism will, in any event, continue to engage US policy makers in reconciling: (a) US interests in the security of the area; (b) US interest in the welfare of a major ally, France; (c) the traditional US position regarding colonialism vs. self-determination; and (d) US relations with the Moslem world. These implications should certainly be examined in the NIE.

5. The State Department is at present drafting an NSC policy paper on French North Africa, Spanish Morocco, and Libya which they say will take some time to complete. We have asked the drafting committee to let us have their views as to the key problems for which they will propose policy recommendations, and toward which we might direct our intelligence examination. Libya was added only because it had not been covered in the NSC paper on the Arab States, but we recommend that it be omitted from the NIE as posing essentially an Arab State rather than a colonial type problem. We might also omit Spanish Morocco as being of essentially secondary importance.

6. We suggest the following general terms of reference, which could be expanded if this is thought desirable. In any case, we suggest that Board action on terms of reference be held up until we have received the suggestions of the State people.



R. W. Komer

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SUBJECT: THE NATIONALIST PROBLEM IN FRENCH NORTH AFRICA AND ITS EFFECT ON US SECURITY INTERESTS

THE PROBLEM

To assess: (a) the strategic importance of the area; (b) the current strength and probable development of local nationalism; (c) the probable French reaction and French ability to cope with the problem; (d) the probable international repercussions; and (e) the probable implications for US security interests. This estimate should be "open-end"; it should look as far ahead as seems feasible.

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT IS THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE AREA TO THE US AND ITS ALLIES?

This section should assess the importance of the area as a strategic complex, both in terms of its direct value to the US and its value to NATO and France as well.

- A. What are direct US strategic interests in French North Africa?
- B. What is the political, economic, and military importance of the area to France? — *as a part of France's total overseas territories*
- C. Is the area of any direct importance to NATO strategic interests as a whole, aside from the above?

II. WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN FRENCH MOROCCO, TUNISIA AND ALGERIA?

This analysis should cover each of these territories individually and trace the inter-relationships where operative.

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- A. What is the level of economic development, industrially and agriculturally? What are strategic economic resources and their availability? What is the extent and nature of foreign economic participation?
- B. What is the distribution of economic and political power among the natives -- between the natives and foreign groups? How large is the European population?
- C. What is the organization, strength and social support, leaders, legal status and political position of the native nationalist groups and their labor and other affiliates? Of Communist groups and affiliates? The relations between nationalist and Communist groups?
- D. What are the aspirations of these nationalist groups and the means by which they hope to attain them? The extent of cooperation between the nationalist groups in the different territories, and of the repercussions of nationalist developments in one area upon the others? The extent to which the nationalist and Communist groups are aided from outside sources -- the Arab countries, the USSR, other? The part played by religious and cultural differences between the natives and foreign elements? Nationalist relations with the US?
- E. What are the strength and nature of the control mechanisms exercised by the French -- economic, political and military? The policies of the French with regard to nationalist aspirations? The extent and means by which France is seeking to reconcile its own interests and nationalist aspirations? The relations between the US and France in the area? The impact upon the French North African position of Spanish policies in Spanish Morocco and with respect to the Arab countries?
- F. What is the relative strength and level of development of the nationalist movement in the three territories? What are the capabilities of each of the native nationalist groups for violence or disruption and French security capabilities for controlling such developments?

III. WHAT ARE THE PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS?

- A. To what extent is nationalism likely to grow further in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco? What are the chief internal and external factors which will influence this development? To what extent might there be further violent disorder or even revolution?

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- B. To what extent will the French be able to cope with this problem? To deal with it militarily in event of violence? To dampen its appeal or divert it by reforms? What policy is France likely to adopt?

- C. What are the probable international repercussions of the further development of nationalism?
 - 1. To what extent will the Moslem states and others seek to put pressure on France? What aid might they extend to the nationalists? How effective is their support likely to be to the nationalist cause?

- D. What is the likelihood of these conflicts reaching UN consideration in the Security Council? In the General Assembly? Under what circumstances? With what probable consequences upon US relations with the Arab countries? Upon US-French relations? US-native relations? Other repercussions in the UN?

IV. WHAT ARE THE PROBABLE IMPLICATIONS FOR US INTERESTS?

- A. What impact might probable developments in North Africa have upon the US base program? Upon the availability of native labor, of local resources, etc.?

- B. To what extent will the nationalists seek US support and what will be the reaction of France to this?

- C. What is the probable impact of North African developments upon the French political scene, and on French military and economic capabilities?

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