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Report Warns That Morocco King Could Fall

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The already shaky throne of King Hassan II of Morocco is being further undercut by an "unwinnable" war in the Sahara and could be toppled within a year, a secret U.S. intelligence report warns.

At the very least, the report says, the war and a combination of other domestic and foreign policy problems is undermining Hassan's authority and encouraging more open political opposition.

"The overall threat to the monarchy is serious, and the political fallout from an unwinnable Saharan war is the most likely catalyst for a direct challenge to the king," the report says.

The document, called an Interagency Intelligence Memorandum and prepared at the State Department, is an analysis of the political situation in Morocco, compiled from reports from the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies.

It was made available by a source critical of the Carter administration's decision this week to sell new American weapons to Hassan to fight Algerian-backed Polisario insurgents in the Sahara.

The announced decision to sell the weapons, which include reconnaissance airplanes and attack helicopters, already has sparked debate in Congress because the United States, while maintaining close ties with Morocco, does not recognize its Saharan claims.

Critics of the sale have evoked comparisons with past efforts of the United States to prop up friendly monarchs and dictators like the Shah of Iran and Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza in the face of popular opposition.

Supporters of U.S. aid to Hassan argue that Morocco is combating an external threat, not a revolution from within the country, and that the United States must stand behind one of its closest friends in the Arab world.

The president's national security advisers reportedly were split over the arms sale and whether it would encourage, or discourage, Hassan to seek a negotiated settlement.

Similarly, while reflecting agreement on the

seriousness of the threat to his regime, the intelligence document portrays a U.S. intelligence community divided on the question of Hassan's ability to overcome it.

The intelligence and research bureau of the State Department, according to the report, believes "that Hassan — a shrewd politician who apparently continues to enjoy the backing of the country's security forces — will reassert effective leadership and continue in power for the next several years."

The report says the Defense Intelligence Agency agrees with that assessment, "although only to the point of believing that Hassan will continue in power 'at least over the next year' rather than 'the next several years.'"

The CIA had a considerably gloomier analysis of the king's prospects for retaining his throne.

The summary says that the agency believes "that the ineffectual leadership displayed by the king since mid-1978 is likely to continue. If it does . . . Hassan will lose control of events — probably within a year — and eventually his throne."

The National Security Agency concurs with this view except for the phrase "probably within a year," the report says.

Besides the Saharan war, the analysis cites "fundamental socioeconomic problems" in Morocco, Hassan's "heavy reliance" on security forces and "widespread corruption among government officials" as factors weakening the king's hold on power.

Yet, the report concludes, resolution of the Saharan war "would greatly improve (his) chances of remaining in power over the next several years."

If the king were deposed Morocco could be expected to "accelerate" its drift from "its uncomfortably close identification with the West," the report says. But such a drift, it says, would occur even if Hassan remains in power.

"King Hassan is already tempted to weaken his close ties with the United States," it says.