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ACTION

June 23, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

*Noted by Pres
8/20/75*

FROM: Mr. Clift

SUBJECT: U.S. Security Interests in Azores -- NSSM 221 Response

State, Defense and CIA have forwarded a good review of U.S. security interests in the Azores. The study establishes that, in fact, there are no good alternative locations for the ASW, aircraft staging, and radio intercept missions performed at our Azores facilities.

As there is a consensus among the agencies, there is no need for further interdepartmental work at present. The study should be maintained up-to-date for contingency use. The memorandum for your signature to the President at Tab A would forward the study for his information.

Clint Granger concurs.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum for the President at Tab A.

NSS, NAVY,
OSD, NSA
review(s)
completed.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: U. S. Security Interests in the Azores

In response to NSSM 221, The Departments of State and Defense and the CIA have prepared a review of U. S. security interests in the Azores (at Tab I), with emphasis on:

-- The political and military significance of U. S. base rights and facilities in the Azores;

-- U. S. policy and options under the range of possible conditions extending from continuation of the status quo to complete U. S. withdrawal; and,

-- Alternative arrangements for transfer of essential Azores operations to other locations, including the political and military considerations involved therein.

The participating agencies have also submitted formal comments and recommendations on the NSSM response (Tab II). Where there are differences among the agencies, they are differences of emphasis rather than substance with Defense taking an even more emphatic position on the importance of the Azores than was expressed in the NSSM response.

Of lesser importance are the NATO-Infrastructure-funded naval fuel storage facility located at Ponta Delgada on San Miguel Island, plus two Portuguese-operated LORAN air navigation sites on the islands of Flores and Santa Maria. U. S. forces are in the Azores under a de facto continuation of the present bases agreement with Portugal which expired in February 1974. The Portuguese are expected to call for formal negotiations on the Azores bases agreement late this year. In public statements, the Portuguese Prime Minister has stated that continued U. S. use of the Azores will be in the NATO context and that operations such

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TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/XGDS

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 2 -

as the airlift during the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict will not be permitted in the future. Meanwhile, the Azores remain firmly under Lisbon's control.

Recent moves for independence by Azorean separatist groups have been poorly organized and have not had support from either the civilian populace or military garrison in the Azores.

The NSSM response, generally supported by agency comments and recommendations, expresses a consensus that now, and into the foreseeable future, the Azores remain an essential and irreplaceable link in our overseas basing structure for missions involving 1) anti-submarine warfare, 2) aircraft staging and en route support

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1. Anti-submarine Warfare (ASW). The principal ASW forces employed from the Azores are long-range maritime patrol aircraft (P-3s) capable of detecting, tracking and, if necessary, attacking submarines. The study states that U. S. facilities in the Azores in support of ASW operations are of critical importance to our ability to deal with the Soviet submarine threat in the central Atlantic -- ballistic missile submarines in the area of the mid-Atlantic ridge as well as attack submarines along the major mid-Atlantic convoy routes between North America and Europe which are essential for the reinforcement of NATO in time of war. The possible alternatives for the P-3 ASW operations -- Rota, the Cape Verde or the Spanish Canaries -- all present political problems, and none would close the ASW coverage gap resulting from an Azores shutdown. Defense adds that in the foreseeable future, there are no adequate technological or geographical alternatives for maritime patrol aircraft operations from Lajes Air Base.

2. Aircraft Staging and Enroute Support. The study implies that the Azores are more of a convenience than a necessity in supporting trans-Atlantic aircraft operations under a variety of conditions -- general war, contingency operations, and peacetime -- recognizing that substitutes for the Azores exist, but not without considerable cost, dislocation, and mission degradation.

Lajes is one of several forward bases which are desired to support aircraft movements to Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. During periods of intense air activity, such as the first 30 days following M-day, multiple staging bases would be needed to support the planned level of operations. Other bases planned for employment in support of the augmentation of Europe include Goose Bay, Keflavik, and Torrejon. Diversion to Goose Bay and/or Keflavik of missions currently planned through Lajes is possible, but some augmentation of facilities would be required. The greater likelihood of adverse weather conditions on the northern route makes total reliance on those bases undesirable.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/XGDS

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 3 -

Bases in Spain, i. e. Torrejon, Zaragoza, Moron, and Rota, could be used in lieu of Lajes for many missions, but some missions would require additional tanker support. Other aircraft, however, must deploy over the northern route, due to range limitations and an inability to refuel in the air. Increased reliance on tanker aircraft would not be desirable, due to many competing demands for this scarce resource.

Apart from the U. S. bases in Spain, the most likely alternative airfields to Lajes for support of contingency operations in the Middle East or North Africa lie in mainland Portugal, the Madeira Islands, the Canary Islands, Morocco, and Senegal. None of these, however, could duplicate the capabilities of Lajes or the Spanish bases without extensive augmentation and/or base development. Also, use of airfields in the Canary Islands and Senegal would be valuable only if overflight of several sub-Saharan African countries were also assured.

Defense emphasizes that alternatives to the Azores exist, but the suitability and availability of such alternatives are clouded by political and technological constraints, adding that loss of the Azores bases would result in less operational flexibility and could cause a significant decrease in current capability. 25X1

The study agrees that NATO fuel storage and SSBN command and control functions now supported from the Azores can be relocated elsewhere without any adverse impact on military capability.

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TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 4 -

The study provides a good response to the NSSM tasking. It should serve as a useful reference document in dealing with contingency situations relating to the Azores. We will maintain the study in an up-to-date status for contingency use should developments in Portugal and the Azores so require.

This memorandum is forwarded for your information; no action is required on your part at this time.

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