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The Guerrilla War in Portuguese Guinea

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THE GUERRILLA WAR IN PORTUGUESE GUINEA

A determined Communist-supported nationalist guerrilla force has succeeded in stalemating some 27,000 Portuguese troops in Lisbon's beleaguered West African province of Guinea. Started in 1961 with terrorist attacks and sabotage, the insurgency has mushroomed into a major challenge to the Portuguese presence in Africa, with implications for Angola and Mozambique, where Lisbon has so far been largely successful in containing similar nationalist rebellions. Within the last few years the Portuguese have been forced to adopt an enclave strategy that has enabled them to defend important positions in the backwater province and has reduced their combat losses to a tolerable rate. At present the Portuguese retain control over all urban and communications centers while conceding the insurgents effective control over large sections of the countryside. Emboldened by past successes and apparently assured of a continuous supply of arms and munitions from Communist and radical African sources, the insurgents over the past year have accelerated the tempo and scope of their operations. Despite the recent change in the leadership of the Portuguese state, all pronouncements from Lisbon indicate that the government intends to stand fast in Portuguese Guinea notwithstanding the territory's economic insignificance.

Background to the Current
Insurgency

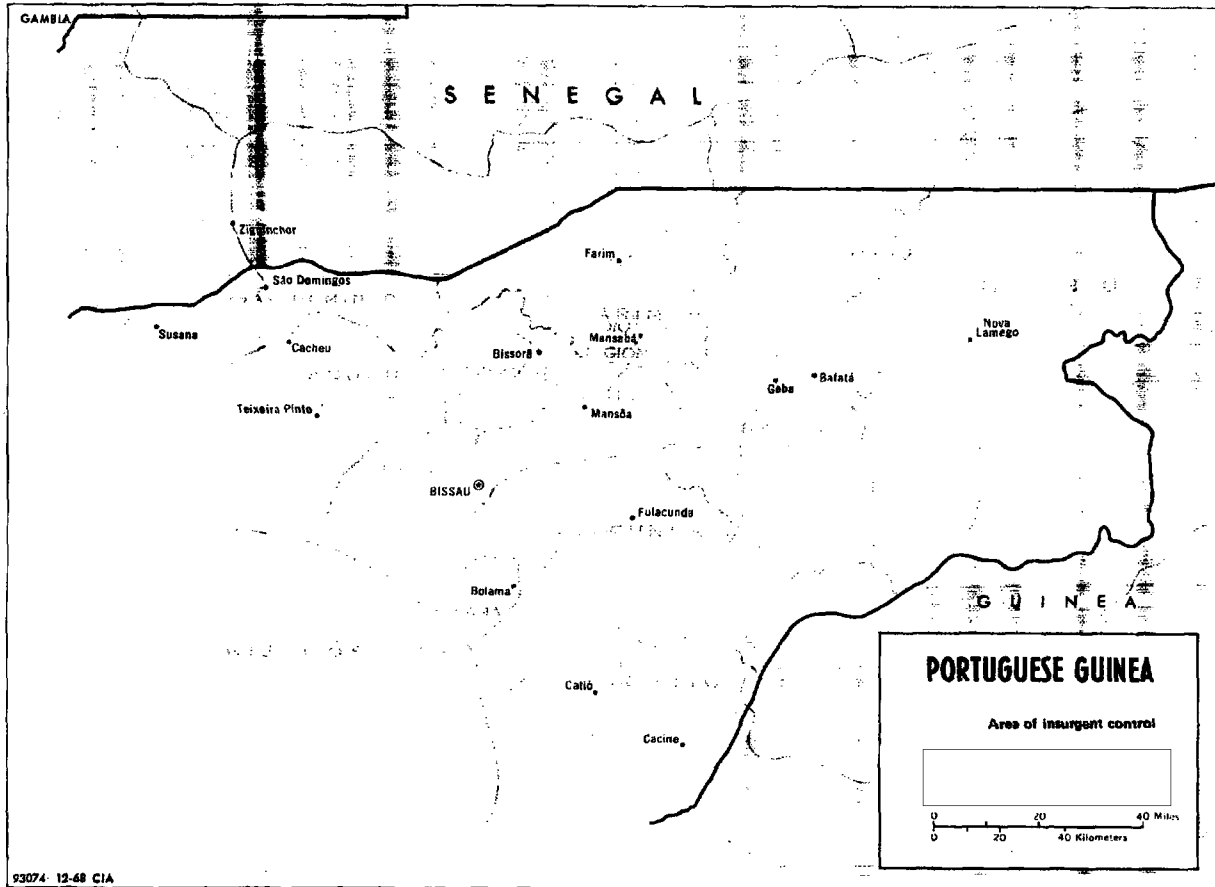
Portuguese Guinea, first explored in 1446, has special significance to Lisbon as its oldest possession on the African continent. Throughout the territory's long history as a Portuguese province it has been troubled by chronic tribal strife; only in the 1930s could the Portuguese claim to have pacified the interior. They have moved very slowly in extending rights to the prov-

ince's black African population. With the introduction of the new Organic Law of 1963, and the revised political and administrative statutes, they hoped to prepare larger numbers of Africans to assume the responsibilities of government. The Portuguese permit their metropolitan population little political freedom, and there is no reason to expect that they will grant much more to Africans, especially Africans as primitive as those found in Guinea. Prior to the '60s the Portuguese

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based distinctions in their treatment of the Africans there on whether they were considered assimilated or nonassimilated. Usually this meant that the resident Cape Verdians, because of their much longer contact with Portuguese language and culture, were given more favorable treatment. Most of the black Africans were classified as nonassimilated and excluded from all but the most menial positions. In fact, they were subjected to compulsory labor and other discriminatory practices, including a separate legal code.

In the mid-50s a group of Cape Verdians who had completed their schooling in Portugal attempted to organize some of the Cape Verdian administrative and urban working elite. They formed an organization called the African Party for the Independence of Portuguese Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC). The PAIGC sought greater rights for the non-Portuguese elements in Portuguese Guinea with independence as the eventual goal. Because all political activity outside of the Portuguese establishment's National Union Party was outlawed, the PAIGC was forced to operate clandestinely.

Labor unrest in the province in August 1959 was climaxed by a series of strikes by the dock workers of Bissau, who demanded better salaries. The Portuguese response was swift and bloody; some 50 strikers were killed, and large numbers of Africans were arrested. Many of those implicated in the strike were

members of the PAIGC. Although at the time of its founding there was little or no indication that the PAIGC contemplated armed insurrection against the Portuguese, the aftermath of the 1959 strikes apparently caused some rethinking of PAIGC strategy. By 1961 the PAIGC's recourse to terrorism and sabotage was confirmed by scattered outbreaks in several parts of the province. Some of these early terrorist attacks were the work of minor, tribally based groups, which, lacking the support and leadership of the PAIGC, were unable to sustain their activities.

Wishing to conduct the guerrilla war from secure surroundings, the PAIGC leadership moved its headquarters from Portuguese Guinea to Conakry, capital of the neighboring Republic of Guinea, at the invitation of Guinean President Sekou Toure. Once there, the PAIGC turned its attention to the rural masses and set about trying to mold the mutually antagonistic tribes into an insurrectionary guerrilla army. When the random terror in which the party engaged for the next few years seemed to bring little return, the party decided to overhaul its tactics and organization.

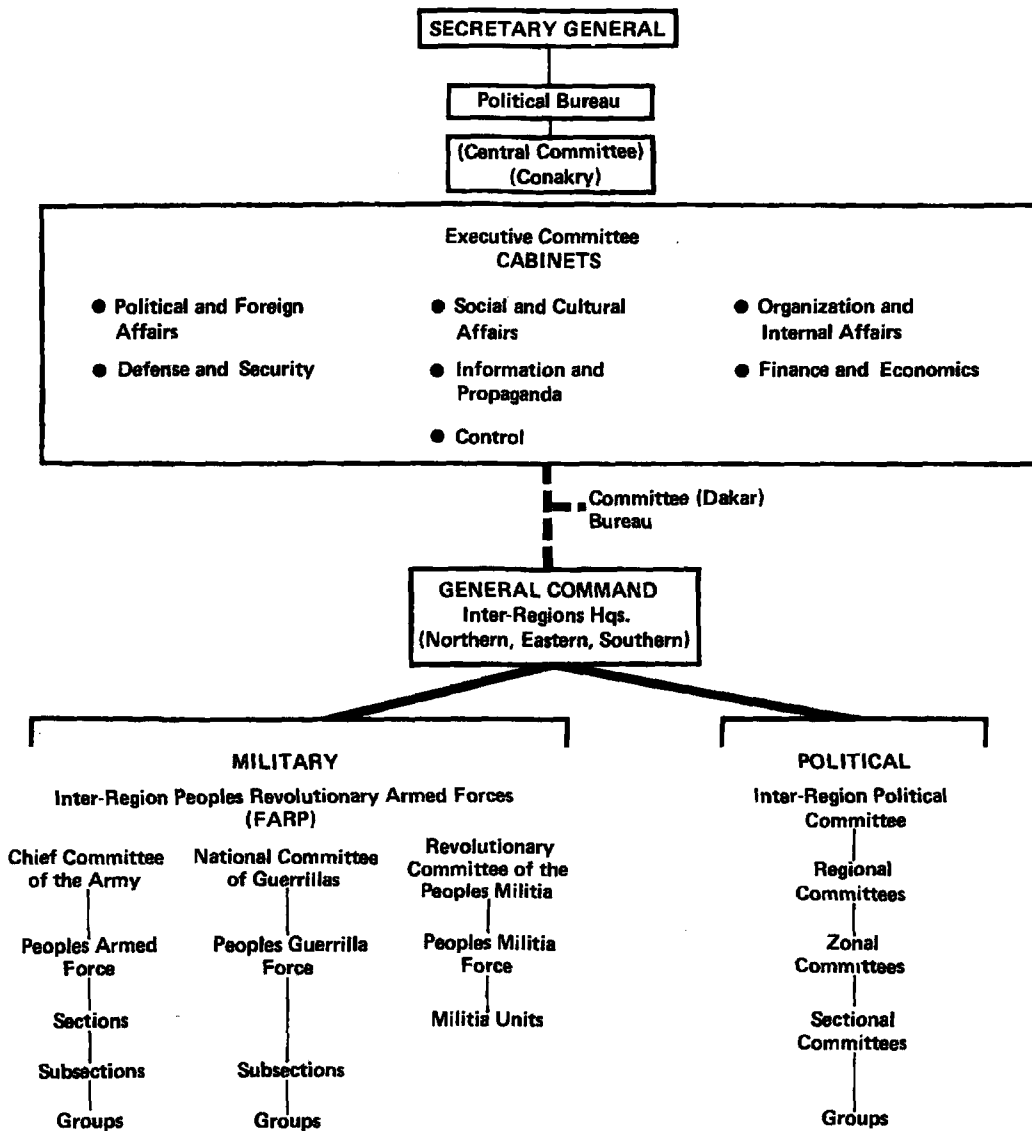
A conference of cadres was held at Geba, in the interior of Portuguese Guinea, in February 1964. The party was concerned with the emergence of petty warlords among its military leaders and attempted to suppress any future challenges to its leadership. The role of the military was clearly defined and made

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Theoretical Structure of PAIGC Organization



----- Gap exists in exact structural relationship between the Central Committee in Conakry and the Inter-Region Commands. Similar gap exists between the Central Committee in Conakry and PAIGC Committee in Dakar



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subordinate to the political side of the party. The territory was divided into three major "inter-regions," and a well-defined chain of command was established with a war council, called the general command, responsible for coordinating all military operations. From 1964 onward, the party decided to expand the struggle throughout the provinces.

After 1961, provincial authorities became increasingly alarmed and appealed to Lisbon for more troops to quell the rising insurgency. Portuguese forces increased from a few thousand troops in the early '60s to a present total of some 27,000. They face a well-armed



Amilcar Cabral, Secretary General PAIGC

guerrilla force, estimated at about 10,000, whose tactics and boldness have shown marked improvement over the early days. The Portuguese, trying to keep their losses to a minimum, have adopted an enclave strategy, whereby they maintain defensive strongpoints at key positions around the province, mainly around urban areas and communications centers. They have relinquished control of much of the outlying area, but they control the air over the province and attempt to keep the insurgents off guard by sporadic aerial harassment.

PAIGC Objectives

The PAIGC's appeal has always been nationalistic. The party seeks to implant the seed of nationalism among the province's unsophisticated and unruly tribes, most of which are more preoccupied with intratribal rivalries than with Portuguese rule. Most of all, the PAIGC demands complete and unconditional independence from the Portuguese. Also high on the party's priorities is the eventual union of the Cape Verde Islands with the mainland. To this end, Amilcar Cabral, founder and secretary general of the PAIGC, stated in June 1968 that the PAIGC was ready to commence armed action in the Cape Verde Islands. There is no evidence to indicate that any armed action has taken place there. Finally, the PAIGC emphatically rejects any notion of eventual partition or fusion of Portuguese Guinea between or with Senegal or Guinea.

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In the economic sphere, the party advocates a system of state control over most sectors of the economy, limiting private ownership to "the possession of goods for individual consumption, family homes, and savings acquired through hard work." In areas under PAIGC control, the party has encouraged the cultivation of rice at the expense of peanuts, which is the primary export crop. Under the PAIGC the state would be all-powerful, controlling the principal means of production, communications, social welfare, education, and culture.

If the PAIGC leans heavily on the Communist world instead of the West, it is at least partly because so much of its present and past support and training have come from that quarter. Marxist terminology and anti-Western epithets--many of them specifically anti-American--are designed to please the PAIGC's current sponsors. PAIGC spokesmen have on several occasions said they would welcome assistance from any quarter, and they have deplored the lack of a Western response.

Organization of the PAIGC and its Military Arm

Theoretically, PAIGC party structure closely parallels that of a Communist party, even to the point of employing the principle of democratic centralism, in which decisions made at the top are binding on lower party levels. At the apex of the party pyramid is the office of secre-

tary general, a post held since the party's founding in 1956 by Amilcar Cabral. Below the secretary general is the 15-member political bureau, containing the party's key functionaries, and a 65-member central committee. Also subordinate to the political bureau is the general command established by the 1964 conference of cadres. Members of this coordinating body are drawn from both the party's political and military ranks. Below the national level the PAIGC's political structure closely parallels its military structure, with political commissars who have the final say attached to each subordinate administrative-military echelon.

The party's armed forces are divided into three components, each under a committee: the peoples armed force, the peoples guerrilla force, and the peoples militia. Each is assigned missions commensurate with its capabilities. The committees charged with directing each of these components in turn report to the general command. Major military operations fall within the purview of the peoples armed force, whereas harassment actions and auxiliary functions are performed by the peoples guerrilla force. The peoples militia appears to play primarily a defensive role. It is charged with protecting villages in PAIGC-liberated areas and in maintaining party control over the inhabitants of these areas.

Party leadership seems to be a one-man show, with Amilcar

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**PAIGC Rebels**

Cabral by far the most prominent of all PAIGC chiefs. Most of the party's other important officials are relatively obscure or at best are well known only inside Portuguese Guinea. Cabral is a trained agronomist and has had practical experience working in that capacity for the Portuguese. He is considered an articulate spokesman for the PAIGC, but he lacks the charisma that one normally associates with revolutionary leaders. He appears to have made friends for the PAIGC not only in the Communist bloc and among the radical African states, but also among some Western coun-

tries that have lent a sympathetic ear to the nationalists.

The party's rank and file consists mostly of youthful militants drawn mainly from the Balanta and Majako tribes. Since 1956 there probably has been intraparty bickering, especially between the black African rank and file and the Cape Verdian leadership, the former being resentful of the secure positions in Conakry held by the latter. Most recently there seems to have been tension between Amilcar and his half-brother Luis Cabral, who has been threatening to break away and set up a new movement with Chinese Communist support. So far, Amilcar Cabral, who appears to possess the political savvy to keep the party together, seems to have weathered the storm and may even have strengthened his position.

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PAIGC Tactics

PAIGC tactics have evolved from the random acts of terror and sabotage of the early '60s to the better coordinated, widespread guerrilla war currently being waged against the Portuguese. Geography and climate make this a difficult war for both belligerents. Military operations are usually limited to the four or five months of the dry season--November to April--when the province's limited road system can be utilized. The province's ubiquitous streams and rivers also present less formidable obstacles during this season; in the rainy season

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flooding makes river navigation highly dangerous. The insurgents, not limited to any particular type of transport, are more flexible in their movement than the Portuguese and can take greater advantage of their opponents during bad weather.

According to Amilcar Cabral, the PAIGC seeks to confine the Portuguese to the urban areas and deny them the outlying areas. Within the past year PAIGC attacks have increased against Portuguese barracks and strong-points along the southern boundary with Guinea and along the northern boundary with Senegal. So great has the pressure become in these areas that the insurgents claim that the Portuguese have been forced to abandon several of their positions and move to more defensible ones. Despite its increasing aggressiveness, however, the PAIGC refuses to seize towns and other large objectives because of the ever present threat from Portuguese air power.

In recent months the PAIGC has attempted to get the UN Committee on Decolonization to condemn the Portuguese for their use of napalm in Portuguese Guinea. Moreover, they accuse the Portuguese of contemplating the use of poison gas and phosphorus bombs.

The insurgent effort is not directed solely against the Portuguese but also against Africans who resist PAIGC authority. Intimidation of Africans ranges

from kidnaping to murder of those accused of collaborating with the Portuguese. PAIGC terror against the tribes has at times been counterproductive, as in 1966 when the Felupes, an extremely backward tribe residing in the Susana area near the northern border, took up arms and drove PAIGC militants across the border into Senegal.

The PAIGC has attempted to limit the movement of Africans under its control into Portuguese-held areas. To this end the PAIGC established a system of people's stores in the areas it holds. They are intended to carry on the functions previously performed by Portuguese and Lebanese merchants. These stores reportedly are stocked with such basic items as salt, sugar, cloth, and kerosene, which are exchanged for surplus rice and other produce grown by the villagers. Whatever surplus is obtained in these transactions is then sold by the PAIGC in neighboring Senegal, and the proceeds are used to help finance its operations. The PAIGC has sought to disrupt the economy by reducing the production of peanuts, the province's major export. The PAIGC campaign against the cultivation of peanuts has apparently had some success in that the export of peanuts has been drastically reduced since the early '60s. The PAIGC has also destroyed peanut storage bins to prevent the peanuts from reaching the port of Bissau, from which they are exported to the metropole.

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The rudimentary administration organized by the PAIGC in the areas it controls reportedly includes some educational and social services. There PAIGC cadres trained in Eastern Europe and assisted by Cuban and Soviet medical personnel are active among the tribesmen.

External Support for the PAIGC

Secretary General Cabral has often stated that the PAIGC will take assistance from any quarter but that so far only the Communist world and some radical African states have responded to his requests. Soviet and other Communist aid to the insurgents is the main reason, according to the Portuguese, that the war has gone on for so long. Soviet assistance in particular appears to be substantial, consisting of weapons, munitions, training, finances, and propaganda support, while other Eastern European states have made contributions in varying amounts. Besides insurgency training, the Soviets and the East Europeans are training PAIGC militants in nursing, medicine, teaching, and other technical fields. Czechoslovakia and East Germany, among the East Europeans, contribute the most to the PAIGC. Most of the arms and supplies destined for the insurgents are shipped by third countries like Algeria and Cuba, each of which funnels it through Guinea, where it finds its way into the hands of the PAIGC. In the early 1960s the Chinese Communists attempted to gain control over the insur-

gent movement, but they appear to have lost out to the Soviets.

the Soviets had supplied the PAIGC with motor torpedo boats,

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Cuba has actively assisted the Portuguese Guinean insurgents by providing guerrilla warfare instructors and medical personnel to help in the "liberated areas." Present estimates place only about 100 Cuban advisers in either Guinea or Portuguese Guinea, although Lisbon claims there are 300. Some advisers have even accompanied PAIGC forces into combat.

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Moreover, Cuban propaganda organs devote considerable attention to the insurgent cause.

Radical African states like Algeria and Guinea have vigorously supported the PAIGC. Algeria has provided the PAIGC with training and funds and has served as an intermediary in the funneling of arms and supplies from Eastern Europe and the USSR. Guinea continues both to provide training sites and sanctuary and to act as the sole pipeline for all the PAIGC's supplies. In addition, certain Guinean facilities are placed at PAIGC disposal. Within the Organization of African Unity, the African Liberation Committee (ALC) has been a staunch supporter of the

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PAIGC, especially since the return of one of its investigative teams from the province in 1965. The party has been a leading recipient of ALC funds for African revolutionary movements.

The Front for the National Independence of Portuguese Guinea

The only other opposition of any significance to Portuguese rule in the province of Guinea comes from a heterogeneous collection of nationalist factions that have joined in a loose confederation known as the Front for the National Independence of Portuguese Guinea (FLING). Formed in 1962 in Dakar, Senegal, as a counterweight to the more aggressive PAIGC, FLING claims to be more representative of the African population of Portuguese Guinea. Since its beginning, however, FLING has been plagued by acrimonious disputes among its leaders over tactics to be used against the Portuguese. Most of FLING's factions represent distinct tribal groups, and some of this bickering may have tribal overtones.

The one matter on which there appears to be common agreement is that all factions detest the PAIGC, some factions even going so far as to accuse it of being a greater evil than the Portuguese. FLING spokesmen have at times charged the Cape Verdian leaders of the PAIGC with trying to replace Portuguese domination with their own. FLING has not been active militarily since 1963, when one of its more

militant factions led cross-border raids into Portuguese Guinea that quickly degenerated into brigandage. Since 1963 FLING's major effort has been devoted to propagandizing against the Portuguese.

Because it tends to take a more moderate line vis-a-vis the Portuguese, while failing to take any military action, FLING has had difficulty obtaining material support. In the past, FLING's greatest supporter has been Senegalese President Senghor, who was evidently concerned about Guinean President Sekou Toure's support for the PAIGC. More recently there are indications that Senghor's ardor for FLING may have cooled and that he may have decided to shift his support to the more activist PAIGC in order to maintain his credentials as an African nationalist.

FLING reluctance to join with the PAIGC still remains rock-hard. There is no evidence that FLING contemplates changing this position, nor is there any indication that Communist offers of assistance, contingent on this change, will soon materialize. Mutual antipathies between FLING's Portuguese Guinean leadership and PAIGC's Cape Verdian leadership will probably continue to block the unity of the nationalist movement.

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Portuguese Countermeasures

Portuguese reaction to the insurgency has been primarily military. The present troop strength marks a sharp increase over the number stationed in Guinea in the early 60s. The province has been divided into three or four military sectors, and its 14 mainline battalions are deployed in varying numbers in each of these sectors. There is an especially heavy concentration around the capital of Bissau. Elsewhere in the province the Portuguese are deployed in enclave positions, in some areas surrounded by a completely hostile countryside. Areas along the southernmost portion of the border with Guinea have come under constant attack and reportedly have been abandoned in favor of more tenable positions. Over all, the Portuguese have not been able to turn back the insurgents and have in fact continued to yield ground to them.

Portuguese air power, the decisive military factor, have so far prevented the insurgents from exploiting many of their gains. As long as the Portuguese can bomb them at will the insurgents probably will not try to hold fixed positions like towns. In general, the Portuguese troops are well trained and equipped, and appear to be capable of handling the present situation without heavy losses. Troop morale reportedly is good, but the protracted nature of this war combined with the discomforts induced by the terrain and climate make morale an im-



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Portuguese Government Troops

portant ingredient in the Portuguese will to put down the insurgents.

Movement anywhere in the province is closely scrutinized by the political police organization (PIDE), which employs a widespread network of African informants and brutally successful methods for extracting information from suspects. The PAIGC has perforce restricted its activities to the outlying areas where the PIDE cannot operate as effectively as in the municipalities.

One of the first measures instituted by the Portuguese to counter the insurgency was the arming of Fulani and Malinke tribesmen, historically the backbone of Portuguese support in the province. Reportedly 10,000 Mauser rifles have been issued to these tribesmen for the defense of their villages, which

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are frequent targets of the insurgents.

The Portuguese have recently begun a fortified hamlet program, similar to that in effect in Angola and Mozambique, with the object of keeping the African populace away from the PAIGC. In some cases this has involved regrouping whole villages and moving them from one part of the province to another. So far this plan seems to involve villages mainly in the northern and central sectors of the province where insurgent harassment has been particularly strong. Portuguese military personnel in conversation with US military personnel have indicated a strong interest in all aspects of the US-sponsored strategic hamlet program in Vietnam. The Portuguese military is engaged in a limited civic action program which appears to be geographically limited to the areas near Portuguese installations and along the main roads. Since the main priority is combatting the insurgency, it has been difficult to get personnel detailed specifically to the civic action program, and in that sense the program has not been a success.

Outlook

Lisbon's inflexible stance in Portuguese Guinea appears to be based on the belief that any signs of weakness shown here would be interpreted by insurgents in Portugal's much more

significant African provinces, Angola and Mozambique, as an indication of weakening in the face of relentless guerrilla pressure.

The Portuguese military establishment considers that it has an important stake in the outcome of the guerrilla wars now being waged in all of Portugal's African territories, and these views are shared by Prime Minister Caetano. The war in Portuguese Guinea will therefore probably continue to drag on with the Portuguese trying to shore up their positions while keeping their losses to an acceptable minimum. The insurgents are likely to continue to improve their capability, provided they continue to receive shipments of increasingly sophisticated arms from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and provided advisers from the Soviet Union and Cuba are obtained. Although the insurgents probably will avoid major battles with the Portuguese, they will be looking for favorable opportunities in places where the Portuguese are most vulnerable, especially along the southern border with Guinea.

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