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PORTUGUESE GUINEA: REBELS ESTABLISH GOVERNMENT

The guerrillas in Portugal's most embattled African territory have proclaimed the independence of "Guinea Bissau." An abundant supply of weapons from the Soviet Union, including ground-to-air missiles, may have contributed to the rebel decision to form a government inside the territory. Most African and a number of other nonaligned nations are likely to recognize Guinea Bissau and support its eventual application for admission to the United Nations, where the US stance will be a critical factor.

Government Declared. On September 24 the independence of the "Republic of Guinea Bissau" was proclaimed at a gathering of guerrilla freedom-fighters held at Madina do Boe, near the Portuguese territory's southeastern border with Guinea. The rebels had been threatening to take this step for the past two years. According to communiques released in Conakry and Dakar, the President of Guinea Bissau's "Council of State" is Luis Cabral, brother of recently assassinated insurgent leader Amilcar Cabral. Under its new constitution, the "government" is headed by Francisco "Chico" Mendes, who has been variously referred to as "Prime Minister," "Chief Commissar," and "President of the People's National Assembly." Aristides Pereira, who was elected to

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replace Amilcar Cabral as head of the insurgents, has no position in the new government but remains Secretary-General of the guerrilla group PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Portuguese Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands), which constitutes the new government's power base.

Policies Outlined. At Pereira's request, the new Guinea Bissau Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Victor Maria, called at our Embassy in Conakry on September 27. Maria stressed that his government's international policy is one of nonalignment. He said the PAIGC takes help from Communist nations, but is not Communist itself. Guinea Bissau, he added, wants good relations with all nations. Maria noted that the PAIGC has been and remains willing to talk with the Portuguese without preconditions (Portugal has thus far not held talks with any of the insurgent movements in its African territories, despite a United Nations Security Council Resolution last year unanimously urging it to do so). The Commissar also confirmed that with Guinea Bissau's declaration of independence, the new national capital and PAIGC headquarters will be located inside the territory. Internally, the new government will probably pursue policies that can loosely be described as socialistic.

Portuguese Playing It Cool. A spokesman in Lisbon has called the Guinea Bissau announcement "a fantasy." He added, "there is no area in Portuguese Guinea which is not under our control." A Portuguese official at the UN called the independence "fictitious and without

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legal or moral foundation." No Portuguese military reaction in the territory has yet been noted.

Military Momentum and Missiles. Thirty thousand Portuguese troops confront 8,000 guerrillas in Portuguese Guinea. Most of the sporadic fighting there takes place near the territory's borders with Senegal and Guinea. The PAIGC controls roughly one-third of Portuguese Guinea along these frontiers. Despite the death of Amilcar Cabral, the military initiative in recent months has been shifting toward the rebels. In part, this has been due to the PAIGC's use of Russian-made, ground-to-air missiles with which the insurgents had knocked down seven Portuguese military aircraft as of a month or two ago. The successful use of these missiles may have been a factor in giving the PAIGC confidence that it could commit itself to declaring independence. Another reason for the step may have been to boost guerrilla confidence and morale, and gain a measure of international prestige, after the blow of Amilcar Cabral's murder.

International Outlook. As of October 4, the new Republic of Guinea Bissau had been recognized by 38 nations, including the Soviet Union, the PRC, Romania, Yugoslavia, and a score of African states. In due course, most "nonaligned" nations, and perhaps one or two in Western Europe as well, are expected to extend diplomatic recognition. More important, Guinea Bissau is expected to apply for admission to the United Nations this year or next. Its request may win support in the General Assembly from as many as 70 members. The United States

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would then face the policy choice of whether or not to veto the admission in the Security Council. An unsupported US veto would cause severe damage to US relations with many African nations.

Another issue for the US is Portugal's stance. In view of that nation's stubborn determination to retain control of its African territories, and its concern that a rebel success in Portuguese Guinea could give new heart to insurgents in Angola and Mozambique, Lisbon is very unlikely to agree soon to handing over sovereignty in Portuguese Guinea. On the contrary, Portugal may seek to insist on greater US support for its position in Africa as one quid pro quo in our forthcoming negotiations for renewal of the Azores Bases Agreement.

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