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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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INFORMATION

January 7, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HC*

SUBJECT: Message from King Hassan to You

Ambassador Tasca, who is in Rome en route to his new post in Athens, has been asked by King Hassan's most intimate confidant, to transmit a personal message from the King to you. Tasca, you will recall, served last in Morocco and was warmly regarded by King Hassan.

King Hassan wants you to know that he is deeply concerned with the dangers to the Maghreb states stemming from the new radical military regime in Libya. He feels that Nasser's subversive capabilities have been greatly improved by access to Libyan financial resources. According to the King, the young and inexperienced leader of the Libyan military regime is only a "straw man" for Nasser who has inserted Egyptian troops into Libya to protect against the possibility of a "counter revolution." King Hassan fears that Nasser's next step will be to eliminate President Boumedienne of Algeria in favor of someone more willing to accept his leadership in the Arab world. The elimination of Boumedienne, according to the King, would greatly increase the subversive potential of both Nasser and the Soviets in Tunisia and Morocco.

The King would like the U.S. to use whatever appropriate influence is available to prevent Nasser's and Soviet plans in the Maghreb countries from succeeding. He feels that unless we take a positive interest in this matter, there is a real danger that the entire littoral of the southern Mediterranean, from the UAR to Morocco, is likely to fall to Communist domination.

King Hassan has been understandably nervous since the Libyan coup. Nasser's growing influence in Libya has contributed further to his agitation, even though there is no immediate organized threat to his throne. The lining up of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria against Nasser's demands at the recent Arab summit -- and Hassan's moderating influence there -- have probably also contributed to his fear that Morocco may be close to the top of Nasser's list for reprisal.

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Another interesting point in Ambassador Tasca's report is King Hassan's impression during the Arab summit that Nasser would like to conclude an agreement with Israel but fears overthrow if he did. Hassan feels that the Palestinians -- not Nasser -- are the key to a settlement now.

All of this indicates the need for a systematic review of the North African situation. I shall provide you shortly with a recommendation on how to do so.

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