

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

1-26697172

29 AUG 1972

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381/Morocco

MEMORANDUM TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: US Military Involvement in Morocco

The recent attempted coup in Morocco and the uncertain future facing the regime lead me to believe that we should consider ways of reducing the level of our military involvement and dependence on the Moroccan communications facilities.

I am aware that some of our activities and military presence is directly associated with the oral agreement with King Hassan in 1963 concerning base management and telecommunications training. I believe, however, that we should make every effort, consistent with that agreement, to shift the actual operating functions of the RMAF base at Kenitra to Moroccans, restricting US personnel to advisory roles. I also recognize that any precipitous withdrawal of personnel involved in training and base operations might adversely affect our continued use of the US Navy communications facilities, and that, therefore, any reductions in presence would have to be done on a gradual basis.

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I would like you to examine this situation and submit recommendations to me on ways we can reduce our involvement by turning over to the Moroccans as many of the operations and maintenance functions as possible at the RMAF base at Kenitra, with US personnel, if necessary, continuing to serve as advisors. I would also like you to examine the impact of the Fleet Satellite Communications System on our continued need for the communications sites at Sidi Yahia and Bouknadel and the desirability of reorienting these facilities by remote-keying (one of the options in the 1971 JCS contingency relocation plan), retaining the use of the Moroccan frequencies but reducing our overall presence in Morocco, and how quickly this could be accomplished. This evaluation should identify costs, personnel and any anticipated degradation of capabilities. I understand the Navy has already initiated studies and actions that could be helpful in determining ways to reduce our dependence on the Moroccan-based communications facilities.

I would appreciate this information and your recommendations by September 23.

Classified by Dir/AF Req/OASD(ISA)
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652.
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO YEAR
INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON
31 DECEMBER 1980.

Kenneth Rush
Deputy

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Sec Def Cont Nr. X-4349

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I-26697/72

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: US Military Involvement In Morocco

The purpose of this memorandum is to assess the situation in Morocco following the abortive coup attempt of August 16th, to examine the level of US military involvement and to propose certain interim actions you may wish to consider toward reorienting our military posture there.

Political Assessment

The situation is outwardly calm but more ominous and menacing toward Hassan's longevity than after last year's attempted coup. Few believe any longer that required reforms are likely to be made, and the military's loyalty to the regime is more suspect than ever.

MOD Oufkir's complicity and alleged suicide, the inept (if not poorly conceived) assassination attempt by the F-5 squadron, the King's chastisement and usurpation of direct control of the military and prospects of yet another purge of the officer staff, has completely shattered the military's morale. The military was the main prop of the regime. Oufkir was the most qualified leader considered capable of maintaining the military's cohesiveness and loyalty. His adventure against Hassan probably reflected his growing awareness of his own pre-eminent personal authority among the military and belief that the King could not or would not alter the regime's style. Oufkir was among the diminishing few who spoke frankly to the King about the regime's shortcomings, and their relationship appeared to be under increasing tension in recent months. While there is still much monarchist sentiment among the poorer classes, Hassan's lavish life style, widespread official corruption, critical unemployment, prospects of increased autocratic rule and military disaffection are likely to accelerate the process of the regime's disintegration.

With the demise of Oufkir and his almost embarrassingly demonstrative pro-US attitudes and apparent desire to maintain the monarchical structure under his own regency, the next coup attempt is more likely to be radical

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and republican in nature and not as favorably disposed to the US. The chance of our being able to hang on to our naval communications station under such circumstances, coupled with a new regime's likely propensity to look for ways to rally domestic support and establish its Arab legitimacy, would be greatly diminished. In the short run, however, while Hassan rules, our Ambassador believes, and we agree, that there may be some opinion favoring our withdrawal from Kenitra but that the King is more likely to want to retain our presence as a gauge of our continued support for the regime.

US Military Involvement

We have about 1350 DoD personnel (mostly Navy and Marine) and 1500 dependents located in Morocco at the Kenitra complex that includes the Moroccan air facility (597 US personnel) and two outlying communications sites at Sidi Yahia and Bouknadel (647 US personnel). The Navy communications station serves as the master station for the area, controlling and coordinating all ship-to-shore communications with US Naval forces operating in the Mediterranean. We also have a 25-man MAAG, including a five-man F-5 augmentation team at the airstrip, associated with a small grant MAP training program (about \$0.8 million a year) and a credit sales program (about \$15 million a year).

Our presence in Morocco was covered by an oral understanding between President Kennedy and King Hassan in 1963, when it was agreed that we could continue to utilize the communications facilities in exchange for our (i) putting Kenitra under Moroccan command, (ii) maintaining the same level of operational expenditures (\$2.1 million) and (iii) training Moroccans in base management and telecommunications. (The sites of the US communications facilities at Sidi Yahia and Bouknadel were not "Moroccanized.")

This week, after the Moroccan Government's initial indication that the USG was suspected of complicity in Oufkir's attempted coup (apparently because of the impression that the US F-5 advisors and Navy personnel at the airstrip must have assisted in some way), the King publicly acknowledged that the GCM's investigation showed no foreign involvement. The King stated that American technicians are in Morocco to teach Moroccans to fly and communicate, that it would be irresponsible for him to incriminate them in the affair and that he was satisfied with the role of the Americans. Our own investigation shows that US personnel were ordered away from the operational area before the F-5s went off on their first strike. Nonetheless, US personnel at the airstrip, in the control towers and in supervisory management roles with the Moroccan facility (e.g. generator plant) are a risk to possible exposure or unwitting involvement in the future.

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A major factor in the value of the station's location is the 250 frequencies Morocco makes available for our use that could not be entirely compensated for elsewhere. At its own initiative, Navy ran a test last year on the impact of operating without the Moroccan frequencies. The Navy believes the need of these frequencies will be critical until our Fleet Satellite Communications System is operational (estimated FY 75/76) and may be of significant residual importance after then. Since last year's coup, and your request for the development of contingency relocation plans, the Navy has been attempting to reduce its dependence on Morocco in its future planning. As they identified in last year's plan, it would be possible to reduce the number of DoD personnel in Morocco significantly by remote-keying the Moroccan station from another location in the Mediterranean, while retaining use of the frequencies. Cost and degradation of capabilities are mitigating factors that will have to be weighed again in light of the present situation in Morocco.

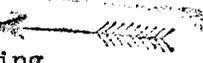
Recommendations

Navy should examine immediately ways to reduce direct US involvement and operational participation in the base management of the Moroccan facility at Kenitra, shifting such functions to the Moroccans, with residual US presence limited to advisory roles. This excludes the actual sites of Navy's communications station at Sidi Yahia and Bouknadel that are under direct Navy management and control and would be better left that way in the current situation. Also, given the uncertain prospects for the continuity of the regime, Navy's future requirements for the communications facilities should be reviewed with a goal of reducing our dependence and presence as quickly as practicable. I, therefore, recommend that you sign the attached memorandum to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff requesting that such reviews be undertaken.

The Assistant Secretary (Telecommunications) concurs with this recommendation.

Armistead I. Selden, Jr.
Acting Assistant Secretary

Attachment

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Signer's copy
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PREPARED BY: LTC R. O. Walters/X79201/Africa Region/cnp/25 August 72

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