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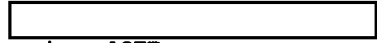
**Interagency
Intelligence
Memorandum**

The Conflict in the Western Sahara

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NI IIM 77-008J



June 1977

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CONFLICT IN THE WESTERN SAHARA¹

PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS

Morocco and Mauritania are tenaciously maintaining their hold on the former Spanish Sahara despite persistent harassment by the guerrillas of the POLISARIO front. Algeria refuses to recognize the Moroccan-Mauritanian annexations, advocates self-determination for the Sahara, and gives substantial material support to the POLISARIO insurgency. In the short term, there appears to be little chance of a negotiated settlement of this conflict.

The POLISARIO movement has caused a significant amount of Moroccan and Mauritanian resources to be used for countering guerrilla activity. As long as the flow of Algerian military supplies is continued and their Algerian safehaven is maintained, the guerrillas should be able to operate almost indefinitely. Numbering only some 3,000 to 5,000 combatants, however, and hampered by logistic constraints and their heavy dependence on limited sources of external military support, they do not pose a strategic military threat to either Morocco or Mauritania. Nor do we believe that the POLISARIO can, at its own initiative, significantly upgrade its existing military force.

During the next two years, the current situation will probably continue:

- Morocco and Mauritania will strive to consolidate their political control over the territory, alleging that integration of the Sahara fulfills the desires of the Saharan people, but avoiding any referendum. They will control the principal population centers but will not be able to eliminate the guerrilla movement so long as it is sustained by Algeria.
- the POLISARIO will continue to move through the countryside harassing Moroccan and Mauritanian forces, and on occasion scoring minor military successes, some of considerable propaganda value.

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

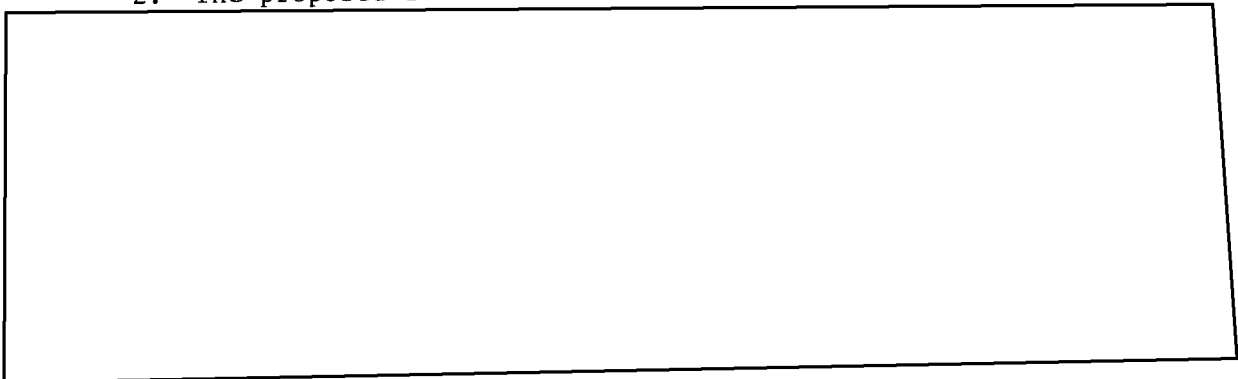
20 April 1977

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: NI IIM 77-008: THE CONFLICT IN THE WESTERN SAHARA

1. The protracted guerrilla war involving Moroccan, Algerian, Mauritanian and Polisario interests in the ex-Spanish Sahara continues to be a potentially escalatory and explosive situation. In view of the US Government's interests in the area, I have asked that a study be undertaken to examine the current situation, assess the likelihood of expanded fighting, and explore the elements of a possible settlement.

2. The proposed Terms of Reference (TOR) for this IIM have been



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3. The tentative production schedule for this IIM envisages completion of the first draft by 9 May and consideration of the draft by NFIB representatives during mid-May.



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Robert R. Bowie
Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence

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