

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
18 October 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Some Implications of Continued Friction
Along the Moroccan-Algerian Frontier

1. Border clashes probably will continue and new areas of hostility may develop along the Moroccan-Algerian border pending negotiations to delineate at least informally the disputed border between Tindouf and Colomb-Bechar. An all-out war seems unlikely in view of the limited capabilities of both armies.

a. The Moroccan Army consists of 32,500 men organized in 18 infantry battalions, 3 each cavalry and artillery battalions, one each armored and engineer battalions, one light security group and two air squadrons, with support units. The Moroccan Air Force numbers 1,940 men and has 105 aircraft (including 22 jets).

b. The Algerian Army consists of 60,000 men, and might be able to expand into a motley force of 200,000. It is inferior in organization, training, and equipment to the Moroccan Army, lacks significant aerial support (2 MIG jets), has very limited capability for aerial surveillance, and is seriously deficient in transport.

3. Should limited hostilities continue or develop into more serious confrontations at points other than Hassi Beida and Tinjoub, where the present skirmishes are occurring, a diplomatic break would be likely. Even if the present crisis subsides, the suspicion with which Morocco and Algeria regard each other certainly will increase.

4. In Morocco, the border difficulties probably will serve to rally support around King Hassan. The crisis in relations with Algeria could even provide the coup de grâce to his organized opposition, which was already disintegrating badly. Potential pockets of dissidence would remain but would be without immediate prospect of uniting into a dynamic and cohesive opposition.

5. In Algeria, on the other hand, difficulties with Morocco could provide the occasion for new outbreaks of anti-Ben Bella and anti-Boumedienne activity. Mobilization seems likely to exacerbate the frictions that already exist between remnants of the former rebel army of the exterior and the army of the interior and that are preventing the development of an effective and reliable Algerian army. Concentration of many Algerian troops on the Moroccan border would almost certainly encourage the Kabylie dissidents to renew activity and embolden potential dissidents in the Orleanville and Aures areas.

6. Even limited engagements along the border and small-scale mobilization would be a serious drain

on the overburdened Algerian treasury--dependent on transfers from Paris--which has never been able to meet the public payroll regularly.

7. Algeria has already initiated steps to have Morocco labeled the aggressor in international forums. It is working initially through the Organization of African Unity, created last May and not yet fully effective. It can be expected to work assiduously at the United Nations to line up support, but as yet there is no indication that it seeks UN condemnation of Morocco. Both Tunisia and Syria have initiated mediation efforts.

8. Border friction has already increased Algerian animosity toward the US. Fallacious press and radio reports that American pilots ferried Moroccan transports in reinforcing the border excited an Algerian group in Constantine to break the windows of the USIS center. The Algerian press, never friendly toward the US, probably will step up its slanted news coverage of events concerning this country.

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10. While Ben Bella appears unlikely to press for additional material Soviet support, he may ask for moral support.

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