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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
17 February 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Possibilities for the Expansion of
US Influence in Algeria

Summary

Options open to the US to increase its influence and prestige in Algeria are few. US relations with Algeria are strained because of policy differences over Vietnam and Algeria's support of "third world" positions in the United Nations which are contrary to US over-all policy goals. Algeria's resentment stems from the lack of overt US support during the Algerian rebellion, and from Algeria's fears that US aid to Morocco and Tunisia is designed to "encircle" and subvert the Algerian regime.

Nevertheless, the US could probably obtain a toe-hold for the present--primarily through economic aid--with the possibility of a slow expansion over the longer term. Even these options are limited however (1) by Algerian and French sensitivities to an American presence in Algeria, (2) by US legislation which compounds the difficulties of concluding economic aid negotiations, and (3) by the failure to obtain Algerian commitment to an investment guarantee agreement.

DIA review(s) completed.

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Background

1. US relations with Algeria have proved difficult ever since Algeria became independent in July 1962. The man in the street seems inclined to be friendly toward Americans, but the government and the National Liberation Front (FLN)--the country's only political party--remain aloof and suspicious. Moreover, the FLN-controlled press, radio, and television are downright hostile toward the US. This attitude originally was a reaction to the real or imagined US support for France--particularly France's use of such American military equipment during the eight-year rebellion. However, the recently improved French-Algerian relations have seen no corresponding betterment in relations with the US.

2. Ben Bella accented his disregard for US sensibilities in October 1963 when, on the heels of a friendly meeting with President Kennedy during which potential US aid was discussed, he flew to Havana for an ostentatious visit with Castro. From 1962 to early 1965, US shipments of wheat which fed large segments of the population--up to 50 percent for some months--were an important factor in maintaining stability.

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[redacted] Ben Bella's open support of the Congo rebellion in 1964-65 caused further strains with the US.

3. With the overthrow of Ben Bella in June 1965 and the installation of the Boumediene regime, relations seemed to improve. Late last year, however, a new downward trend developed as Algerian officials pressed for a favorable reply to their request for more wheat and Algerian propaganda agencies stepped up their attacks on everything American--from policy and military activities in Vietnam to racial difficulties in the US. Boumediene, while taking a more anti-Communist tack, continued Ben Bella's policy of accepting heavy Soviet military and economic aid.

4. Current frictions in US-Algerian relations center primarily on Vietnam. Algeria supports the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NFLSV--the Viet Cong),

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which maintains an office in Algiers. The Algerian regime has sent some medical supplies which originated in the US to the Viet Cong, and exchanges diplomatic representatives and numerous visiting delegations with Hanoi. Algeria equates the situation in Vietnam with its own struggle for independence and demands that the US withdraw all troops. It is unlikely that this policy will change significantly.

5. A second major source of friction is US military aid to Morocco and Tunisia. The Algerians not only find rumors of American bases in both countries credible, but also believe that the US would use the Sixth Fleet together with the alleged bases to encircle Algeria and wipe out its socialist regime. The French press and certain French residents of Algeria--who are antagonistic toward the US because they assume the US wants to usurp France's position in North Africa--have nourished these "encirclement" fears.

6. In the United Nations Algeria invariably sides with forces opposed to US aims. In some issues, such as the admission of Red China, it takes the lead in opposing the US. Other frictions have involved the seizure of US Government real estate in Algiers, the closure of the US cultural center in Constantine on charges of subversion, the nationalization of firms in which Americans have financial interest, and demands that the US reduce the number of persons diplomatically accredited.

7. Suspicion of foreigners is not limited to the US. Most other embassies have their own extensive dossiers of frictions with the Algerians. No diplomat, for example, may travel far outside the city of his residence without obtaining advance permission from the Algerian authorities.

8. Despite a hostile press, radio, and television, there have been no mob attacks on American citizens or facilities--such as has been experienced within the past year by the Moroccan and Jordanian embassies and a Soviet diplomat. Demonstrations which have occurred near US establishments have been carefully policed.

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Characteristics of the Boumediene Regime

9. Algeria is an avowedly socialist state which aspires to leadership in the so-called "third world." The Boumediene regime, nevertheless, is more interested than was Ben Bella in building up the country domestically and is less inclined toward foreign adventures. The regime's primary concern is to develop Algeria's resources so that it may feed, provide work for, and educate its 11 million hungry, underemployed, and largely illiterate people. It is, however, extremely difficult to conduct any business with the government. Over and above the suspicion and distrust, the government lacks capable administrators, and government employees generally are grossly inefficient. At the same time, the regime is loath to delegate responsibility to the capable foreign advisers it has employed.

10. There is little likelihood of a change in government, or of a different outlook if a change should occur. The general aura of instability which surrounds the Boumediene regime stems in large part from reports of friction among its members and the development of antagonistic cliques. Despite these reports, the regime appears to have a good deal of durability and is very slowly progressing toward administrative and agricultural reform. There is no effective opposition. Most politically experienced Algerians not collaborating with the regime seem to be sitting on the sidelines, waiting for it to run into insurmountable economic difficulties. They do not seem to be conspiring actively to overthrow the regime. The several leftist-oriented Algerian groups which engage primarily in anti-Boumediene propaganda are based in Europe and seem to have no appreciable following within Algeria, although a few of their followers have been arrested and imprisoned.

11. Some Algerians within the regime and among the opposition might welcome greater US interest in Algeria, but no one of them could be singled out as a genuine friend of the US. Although they are probably reluctant to take any initiative, many would welcome an American presence as a means of diversifying their sources of

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assistance if only to preclude too exclusive a dependence on either France or the USSR. The Algerians also admire US technical competence and would like to benefit from it.

Foreign Relations

12. Algeria's determined orientation in external affairs, the continuing strong position of France, and the near Soviet monopoly in the military, all are obstacles to increased US influence. Algeria is allied with the radical blocs of Africa and the Arab states. Pledged to the decolonization of Africa and the liberation of Palestine from Israel, Algiers has given asylum to exiled opposition elements from both groups, and has furnished military training and arms to black African and Palestine Liberation forces. Despite frequent exchanges with Egypt, however, Boumediene basically does not like Nasir, whom he considers Ben Bella's patron.

13. Despite the bitter struggle for independence and Algeria's nonaligned stance, it continues to enjoy a special relationship with France. De Gaulle considers Algeria France's most important link with the "third world" and is considerably more patient and generous with the Algerians than most French officials who are involved in the prolonged and difficult negotiating sessions are inclined to be. France is still the principal source of economic and technical assistance, the major supplier of goods and services, and the principal purchaser of Algerian products, particularly wine and crude petroleum. More than a half million of Algeria's surplus labor find employment in France, and each week dozens more vainly attempt to go to France.

14. Thirdly, the USSR enjoys an increasingly influential position by virtue of its readiness to equip and train Algeria's military forces, the dominant force in present day Algeria. The USSR has enjoyed less success in effecting its economic assistance projects, and its technicians probably experience all the frustrations endured by other nationalities.

Options Open to the US

15. Military. The military avenue is largely closed, though not completely. As noted, the USSR enjoys a near

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monopoly in supporting the Algerian armed forces. The US, however, already has a foothold because American firms have supplied communications equipment and some quartermaster materiel. The Algerians have purchased a number of vehicles from non-Soviet sources, and they are seeking to diversify training (France, Egypt, Italy, and the UK are training small numbers of military specialists). The Algerian Defense Ministry has not responded to an invitation for a small group of officers to visit the US. A few officers, however, have indicated to US military attaches their interest in such a visit as well as their preference for American equipment.

16. Agriculture. This area is probably the most promising opening for the US, given Algeria's needs, the regime's rural orientation, and its desire to build up the economy. The Algerians have generally been receptive to American agricultural projects. They especially need training in modern agricultural management and practices. For instance, they are particularly short of veterinarians and probably would welcome crash courses in veterinary medicine for large numbers of farm youth.

17. Industry might also provide some openings. The Algerian Government seeks to expand its industry. A number of Americans have been employed as advisers in the Ministry of Industry, and several American firms have been employed to conduct feasibility studies of new industrial projects. The Algerians are also pressing American oil companies to make large-scale investment in the petrochemical industry. Having lost out recently in its efforts to enter into the Italian and Eastern European gas market, Algeria might be particularly receptive to anyone who could suggest ways and means to get new markets for its large supplies of natural gas.

18. Trade. Although Algeria presently has no difficulties in marketing its petroleum, this condition presumably would change when the French-Algerian petroleum agreement expires or when Algeria is in a position to

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market further quantities of crude oil. At present it seeks new markets for its wine and would welcome an American outlet. US wine purchases could generate foreign exchange for the purchase of US agricultural and industrial equipment which are admired in Algeria.

19. Education. A few American-educated Algerian officials fill responsible positions. Increased scholarships for technical training--such as petroleum and chemical engineering--might increase American influence in these quarters. Algerian officials have responded enthusiastically to English-language study opportunities made available by the American cultural centers in Algeria. Although there has been no flow-through, the Algerian Government initially was receptive to the idea of a Peace Corps program.

20. Medicine. Three American public and private medical programs are well received in Algeria. Expansion of the number of such projects could fill a vital need, but would not necessarily expand American influence appreciably.

21. US policy has supported a dominant French influence in Algeria and North Africa generally. Algerian ties with France will presumably relax, however, when De Gaulle no longer dominates French politics even though France reportedly has received permission to use some military test facilities in the Sahara beyond the original terminal date of 1 July 1967. The post-De Gaulle era may provide more options for expanded US influence. Alert action by the US might prevent the USSR alone from being able to move into any vacuum created by the retraction of French influence.

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Talking Paper on: "Possibilities for the Expansion of
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1. This memorandum is a follow up to a NSC meeting on Algeria. It is in the nature of a think-piece for top CIA officials and contains an extensive summarization of the difficulties in effecting a significant enlargement of the US presence in this important Maghreb country with suggestions of some limited possibilities for US action.

2. The memo emphasizes Algeria's radical heritage and the background of its distrust of Western, and particularly American, policy. The ideological picture is, of course, muddled by the continued major French role in Algeria. However, France's interests are not necessarily parallel to those of the United States and may undergo a significant reduction upon the demise of President De Gaulle. The problem is complicated for the US because of Algerian distrust of, and hostility toward, the neighboring states of Morocco and Tunisia which are oriented toward the US. As paragraphs 15-20 state, the best prospects for US influence lie in the agricultural aid, followed by industrial assistance and, perhaps, specialized military training.

3. Controlled internal dissemination is suggested. The Director may find the memo of interest in view of his attendance at the NSC meeting which called for a re-examination of the Algerian problem in six months time.

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