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PROGRESS REPORT ON NSC 5436/1

By MMK NLDDE Date 3/14/14

UNITED STATES POLICY ON FRENCH NORTH AFRICA
(TUNISIA, MOROCCO, ALGERIA)



(Policy Approved by the President, October 16, 1954)

(Period Covered October 17, 1954 - April 29, 1955)

A. SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTIONS

1. Efforts to Bring About Political Progress. Secretary Dulles expressed to Premier Mendes-France, during talks in Washington last November, U.S. concern over the need for rapid progress in French-Tunisian negotiations and for French steps to create conditions of confidence that would allow French-Moroccan negotiations. The Paris Embassy and Department of State officials have reiterated these views to responsible French officials.

2. In efforts to facilitate negotiations, the Department of State and its representatives urged Egyptian and other Arab leaders and Spanish officials to moderate their broadcasts beamed to French North Africa. At the U.N., the U.S. voted against the original Arab-Asian resolution on Morocco and in favor of resolutions postponing further consideration of the Moroccan and Tunisian items "for the time being".

3. Maintenance and Expansion of Military Facilities. The Air Force and Navy are making good use of their Moroccan bases but Air Force operations are hampered by lack of French agreement on several points. French Government agreement was obtained to the rotation of USAFE units into Morocco for gunnery training and to the conduct of short periodic air maneuvers by elements of the Strategic Air Command but the French Government has not agreed to desired increased ceilings for military and civilian personnel. Agreements between representatives of the American and French Air Forces concerning joint operations of the Moroccan Air Defense Control Center have been reached but they do not cover the details of operational control and have not been confirmed at the government level. Precise and satisfactory agreements are yet to be reached to provide for adequate air defense of the area and the French at this time appear determined that they retain ultimate control of the local air defense as stipulated in the base agreements.

4. There are a series of other problems connected with the bases which the French consider are tied together. They involve (a) the French insistence that it is required by prior agreements that Atlas Constructors, the American prime contractor in Morocco, cease operations in the near future, (b) conclusion of agreements on tax relief and status of U.S. forces, (c) increased personnel ceilings and (d) other operational limitations. In addition, there are the problems of the French desire to utilize the airfield at Nouasseur for commercial traffic, and the shortage of on-base dependent housing.

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The French Government has not replied to requests for new facilities in Algeria and Tunisia, desired largely to bolster air defense of the SAC bases and also for post D-Day naval operations; recent discussions indicate French opposition to the peacetime stationing of U.S. troops in either of these two areas.

6. Deployment of French Troops and MDAP Equipment. The increased violence and unrest has caused the French to deploy considerably larger forces to North Africa to the detriment of their military contribution to European NATO forces. Much of the equipment with these forces is of U.S. origin, some MDAP financed, and it is politically disadvantageous to the U.S. vis-a-vis the nationalists to have it used against the latter. The Departments of State and Defense have in the past and will continue in the future to seek to minimize the use of this equipment for such purposes and to urge the return of forces to the European theater.

7. Moroccan Treaty Rights. The French have been making it more difficult for us to exercise our treaty rights, primarily in the field of "economic liberty without any inequality" and we have formally protested the imposition of import quotas on certain items. At the same time, we have expressed a willingness to consider any French proposals for negotiating a clarification of economic aspects of the Moroccan treaties.

8. Continuing Economic Aid Projects.

a. Tunisia. In an October 1954 agreement with the French Government, grants of \$256,000 in technical assistance and 560 million French francs (\$1,600,000) in development assistance are being made to France for the acceleration and expansion of agricultural development in the Medjerdah Valley.

b. Morocco. A Basic Materials loan totalling 2,638 million francs (\$7,537,000) to help finance extension and improvement of the Port of Nemours, modernization of the Moroccan railroad system, and hydroelectric development and construction of high tension transmission system. Physical completion of the projects is not expected before the end of 1955.

9. Information Activities. USIA activities currently are limited to factual news reporting, and publicizing American cultural activities by means of the information centers, TV, radio and films.

B. EVALUATION OF PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING NSC POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

10. Political Progress in the Area. On April 21, after nearly nine months of negotiations, French and Tunisian negotiators signed a protocol providing for Tunisian autonomy which should go far to ease tensions in Tunisia. If the protocol is developed into a full agreement that is ratified by the French parliament during the next month or two -- and this is by no means assured, a new era, favorable to U.S. objectives, would be opened in Franco-Tunisian relations.



11. In Morocco, the nationalists refuse to negotiate so long as the throne is occupied by the present Sultan, who replaced the nationalist-minded Sidi Mohammed ben Youssef in August 1953. Mendes-France was expected to seek answers to the more complicated Moroccan problems once Tunisian autonomy had been negotiated but he was voted out of office (ostensibly because of his North African policies) and the successor, Faure, government has only attempted to repress the violence that resulted in the killing or wounding of roughly a thousand persons during the past year. It has completely failed to restore confidence although there are indications that the French are coming to recognize that a solution of the dynastic problem is a prerequisite to progress.

12. Unrest has also spread to Algeria, which is legally part of Metropolitan France, and so far French efforts have been primarily repressive with no indications of needed reforms in sight.

13. Effectiveness of, and Limitations on, U.S. Actions. There are severe limitations on the scope, and consequently, the effectiveness of U.S. actions. U.S. actions have encouraged the recent favorable Franco-Tunisian developments, but it was essentially French and Tunisian actions that brought them about. Similarly, the Moroccan and Algerian situations are such that the U.S. cannot effectively direct or control them short of direct intervention. Solutions depend as much on internal French politics as they do upon the actions or reactions of the native nationalists. The U.S. can urge moderation and compromise but attempts to press specific suggestions or proposals for solutions to these highly complicated and emotionally charged situations would not in most cases be effective or advantageous and might, in fact, react adversely upon our military program.

14. The French are suspicious of U.S. intentions with regard to North Africa and their suspicions are largely responsible for the limitations they place on the scope of our military program there. If we were to go too far in pressing the French toward North African reforms, our present fairly successful utilization of the bases in Morocco could be jeopardized. On the other hand, we cannot give the French the support they desire for their North African policies without incurring the enmity of the native populations and adversely affecting our relations with the Arab-Asian nations, who at Bandung were united in attacking French policies in North Africa. Even our present middle of the road position is criticized as being, in fact, in support of the French.

15. The French do not like to see an American label on any aid extended to North Africa -- it makes them fear that the Arabs will think that France is unable to provide for their basic needs and their economic development. Since last October there have been no new requests from the French Government for U.S. technical or development assistance for projects in Morocco or Tunisia nor is there reason to believe any such requests will be forthcoming in the near future. Although in the past few months emergency situations have arisen both in Morocco (locust invasions) and in Tunisia (severe drought, food shortage and locust invasions) which have been closely followed by FOA, State and Agriculture, the French have not indicated any need for outside assistance in meeting these emergencies.



16. As a result of French sensitivities toward any outside influence on the native population and toward foreign comment on what they consider their domestic affairs, the information program is necessarily limited.

17. No Suitable Alternatives to Present Policies. We are conducting what in effect is a holding operation which is the best that can be done inasmuch as any alternative policies would be more prejudicial to overall U.S. interests. In the final analysis North Africa is a French responsibility and we depend on the French for our strategic requirements in the area. The importance of France in Europe and in the NATO Alliance, as well as the strategic and monetary value of the bases in Morocco, prevents any shift of our policies towards more support of the nationalists against France. Such a move could easily lead to even more bloodshed than is caused by the present terrorist campaign of the nationalists and, certainly, the French would not allow themselves to be peaceably ejected from the area. Recent developments in Europe, such as finally French approval of German rearmament, or in Indochina do not give the U.S. any substantial freer scope of possible action with regard to North African problems so long as we wish to obtain maximum utilization of our bases in North Africa and to build strength in Western Europe, an area in which France geographically and politically occupies a central position.

18. Thus the best hope for peaceful solution of the North African problems, however slender that hope may be, is for the French to turn their promises of reform into a specific and practical program of action. No changes in U.S. policy directives are warranted at this time.

C. EMERGING PROBLEMS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

19. Solutions are being sought for the problems set forth in paragraphs 3 through 7. It may be necessary to reach certain compromises to resolve their problems.

20. Re-Examining Military Requirements. Because of the French attitude described above and because of the questionable outcome of the conflict between the French and the native nationalists it may be necessary for the Department of Defense to re-examine its plans regarding additional military requirements to determine (a) whether they could be obtained in an alternate location, (b) if they cannot be relocated, whether they should be pursued further in spite of the difficulties involved. It should be noted that the larger our stake in French North African bases, the greater is the need to work with the French in the area.

21. Political Progress. The future implementation of our policy will depend to a great extent on the course of events over which the U.S. will have limited influence. We shall continue to urge, to the extent possible, bilateral negotiations of necessary reforms in Morocco and Tunisia. We should seek to influence, to the limited extent possible, favorable evolutionary developments in Algeria.



22. UNGA Consideration. If the almost unanimous expressions of confidence contained in the 1954 UNGA resolutions are not realized, which is likely, many members at the next UNGA may demand that the UN investigate or intervene. Such developments would greatly complicate the problem of what the U.S. could or should do under circumstances. However, the time has not yet come when the U.S. should resort to the course of action prescribed in paragraph 21 of NSC 5436/1 concerning making use of UN procedure if the French and nationalists are unable to reach bilateral agreement.

23. French Efforts to Obtain Support. Pursuant to a French Government statement just prior to final ratification of the Paris agreements, the Government may increase its efforts to obtain broad U.S. support for French North African policy under the guise of NATO solidarity on political issues. Inasmuch as it will be impossible to act favorably on such a request, some difficulties with the French can be anticipated.

24. Information Activities. The U.S. Information Agency has weighed the advisability of maintaining its posts in French North Africa where the program is restricted to factual news reporting and cultural activities. The decision to continue the operation is based on the fact that the general populations of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria are being reached by press releases and are utilizing the library facilities and are participating in the cultural activities. The withdrawal of the U.S. Information Services would be interpreted by the non-French population as a withdrawal of our interest in their welfare. It would also give comfort to the French Administration which covets the desire to eliminate all influence but its own. U.S. objectives are not identical with those of the French. Therefore, USIA is faced with the problem of continuing its activities in French North Africa in order to advance those long-range U.S. objectives with which the French are not identified.

25. Economic Activities. It has become apparent that the French Government's interest in possible U.S. assistance to French North African projects is restricted primarily to financial assistance. The French will accept technical assistance only as part of larger development assistance projects (only exception to this being a relatively minor interest in EOA-financed study in the U.S. for French colonial technicians). U.S. aid available in FY '55 for French African DOT's (including Morocco and Tunisia) has been limited to technical cooperation funds. The French Government has expressed no interest in availing itself of this aid for Morocco or Tunisia.