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#1 memo	Read to Bundy <i>open 12-10-99</i> <del>S</del> 1 p	2/4/64	<del>A</del>
#1a rpt	"Withdrawal from Moroccan Bases" <del>S</del> 1 p <i>open 6/13/13</i>	<del>undated</del>	<del>A</del>
#1b rpt	Attachment to #1a <del>S</del> 8 p <i>open 7/21/17 per NLJTRAC 13-128</i>	<del>undated</del>	<del>A</del>
#2 memo	NSAM 232 <i>open 12-10-99</i> <del>S</del> 1 p	4/5/63	<del>A</del>

FILE LOCATION

**NSF, NSAM, NSAM 232, Follow-up on King Hassan's Visit**

**Box 1**

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

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February 4, 1964

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S/S 1919

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDY  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Withdrawal Report on Moroccan Bases

Transmitted herewith is a final report under NSAM 232 of the actions taken with respect to U.S. bases in Morocco agreed upon between King Hassan II and President Kennedy last March.

Benjamin H. Read  
Executive Secretary

Enclosure

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Group 3

Downgraded at 12 year intervals;  
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White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983  
By ry, NARA, Date 11-16-99

FEB 5 1964

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Subject: Withdrawal from Moroccan Bases

Summary

This represents a final report under NSAM 232 of the virtual completion of actions with respect to U.S. bases in Morocco agreed upon between King Hassan II and President Kennedy in March 1963.

The three SAC bases were evacuated in December. U.S. naval personnel continue to operate the Naval Communications Facility in Kenitra, but as of December 16, 1963, under the Moroccan flag with their function ostensibly as a training mission to enable Moroccans to operate the base.

The withdrawals were carried out smoothly and on schedule. The U.S. Air Force was able to remove that equipment not excess to its needs. The Moroccan Government, despite repeated urgings, did not come forward with projects which could justify the retention of non-excess material in Morocco, except in one instance--the decision to convert Nouasseur into an international airport. Arrangements have been made to consider a Moroccan loan application for this purpose

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By jc, NARA, Date 6-3-13

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## 1. Introduction

This represents a final report under NSAM 232 of the virtual completion of actions with respect to U.S. bases in Morocco agreed upon between King Hassan II and President Kennedy in March 1963.

The United States withdrew from the SAC bases at Ben Guerir and Sidi Slimane on December 2, 1963, and from the SAC base at Nouasseur on December 16. On December 16 it also transferred command of the base at Kenitra to the Moroccan authorities while continuing to maintain a U.S. presence there. The withdrawals from three SAC bases and the transfer at Kenitra were in accordance with agreements between President Eisenhower and King Mohamed V in December of 1959 and, as noted above, between President Kennedy and King Hassan II in March of 1963. The purpose of this report is to describe the withdrawals and base transfer and the background thereto; the status of the U.S. forces that remain at Kenitra; the future of the facilities that have been turned over to Morocco, and possible residual problems.

The general conclusion of the report is that on the whole the withdrawal and transfer proceeded smoothly, although some residual problems associated with the former U.S. presence on the bases and the continuing U.S. presence at Kenitra may arise. It is also concluded that the U.S. experience in attempting to effect a conversion of the three SAC bases to civilian uses through extensive approaches to the GOM indicate that in future withdrawals from military bases U.S. attempts at further civilian utilization be undertaken only when there is a firm determination and demonstrated capacity on the part of the host government to provide effective cooperation.

## 2. The Withdrawals

a. From Sidi Slimane and Ben Guerir: On December 2, 1963, Sidi Slimane and Ben Guerir Air Bases were released to the commander of the Moroccan Army company located at each base. No formal ceremonies were conducted upon departure. The Moroccan Army commanders at each base were advised of the departure of all U.S. personnel and that all USAF responsibility for the installations ceased upon departure of the USAF base commander. The following written statement was signed by the Moroccan Army Commander at each base:

"Command of Ben Guerir (Sidi Slimane) Air Base was released to the Government of Morocco by the USAF Commander at 1200 hours on 2 December 1963."

The departure of USAF personnel was orderly, without incident and the atmosphere was cordial and friendly throughout. At Ben Guerir, the Moroccan Commander of all military operations in the Marrakech area and the Commander of Marrakech Air Base attended a meeting at Ben Guerir to express their appreciation for the many years of cooperation between the USAF officials of Ben Guerir and the GOM officials of the Marrakech region, and to express their

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thanks for all the equipment and base facilities being left at Ben Guerir Air Base. At Ben Guerir the Governor of Marrakech hired the LWRs (locally hired employees) working in the base utility systems to assure the systems' continued operation. Upon departure all utility systems were operating.

b. From Nouasseur: A brief departure ceremony involving 15 Moroccan troops and 15 U.S. airmen took place at noon on December 16. Prior to this the USAID Director received signed receipts for F.A.A. equipment and large demountable buildings from the Secretary General of the Ministry of Public Works, who was accompanied by some 40 Moroccan and French technicians. The Director of the Moroccan Electric Company hired 20 technicians, 5 of whom are Americans, to run the power plant.

c. At Kenitra: At 1600 on December 16 at a ceremony in front of the Moroccan military academy now installed on the base at Kenitra, command of the base was transferred. Moroccan officials present were Foreign Minister Guedira, Defense Minister Ahardane, General Mezzian, Governor of Rabat Province Bensouda, and Moroccan Army general staff officers. Honors were rendered by one platoon of U.S. Marines and one company of the Royal Moroccan Army and band. United States Ambassador Ferguson spoke in general terms of U.S.-Moroccan friendship. Foreign Minister Guedira replied that U.S.-Moroccan friendship was a result of close ties between King Hassan and President Kennedy. He said he regretted the GOM did not have the means to maintain the base as it had been but that it looked forward to our help in the future. He spoke warmly of the ties between the U.S. and Morocco and expressed his hope for future friendship on a new basis during the era whose beginning was marked by the transfer. The Moroccan flag was raised, accompanied by band music.

d. Ceremonies: The ceremonies surrounding our departure were kept to the minimum consistent with our objectives of maintaining cordial relations with both the French and Moroccan Governments and the retention of forces necessary to carry out the U.S. Navy mission at Kenitra.

Initially the Moroccan Government gave no indication that the U.S. withdrawal was of particular interest or required any public notice. Except for those minor ones noted above, no Moroccan officials participated in the Ben Guerir and Sidi Slimane turnovers.

However, on December 11, Foreign Minister Guedira mentioned both Nouasseur and Kenitra to the Ambassador and inquired whether U.S. officials could participate in ceremonies there. He expressed his belief that such ceremonies would demonstrate the absence of any rupture between Morocco and the U.S. as a result of the base turnover. Consonant with the Ambassador's suggestion, the Department authorized him to participate in ceremonies to the extent required. On December 15 Foreign Minister Guedira informed our Ambassador that no ceremony would be held at Nouasseur but that he would be present and expected the Ambassador to be present also for a ceremony at Kenitra.

At Kenitra,

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-3-

At Kenitra, the Foreign Minister declared that the U.S. forces were leaving a friendly country where they would always be received as welcome guests. He reviewed the ties of friendship between Morocco and the United States and expressed the belief that Morocco in inheriting a "great base" would have the help of American technicians to assure its maintenance.

The statement was noteworthy for its cordiality, for its indication of continued U.S.-Moroccan cooperation and for the basis it could provide for the continued U.S. presence at Kenitra.

### 3. Background to the Transfers and Withdrawal Procedures:

a. Notifications to the French: As noted above, the U.S. withdrawal from the SAC bases and its transfer of command at Kenitra was the result of Presidential agreements with the Moroccan sovereigns in 1959 and 1963. The withdrawals, however, were complicated by the fact that the bases had been built when the French were still in control of Morocco. The U.S.-French agreement of 1951 which gave the U.S. access to the bases provided that the U.S. forces could stay as long as was necessary but that on their withdrawal the bases and permanent structures thereon would be turned over to the French. After Morocco became independent in 1956, the French Government did not insist on strict adherence to this provision of the agreement in view of its other interests in Morocco. However, in the first three years of Moroccan independence, when France still maintained troops in Morocco, the French Government was anxious that no understanding between the U.S. and Morocco be entered into involving our bases which might undercut the ability of France to keep its military forces in Morocco.

By early 1960 there were no longer sufficient numbers of French troops in Morocco to make their continued presence there of major importance to France. French Government concern then focused solely on seeing that U.S. withdrawal from the bases was conducted in such a manner that the French claim to the land on which they were built should not suffer. To satisfy the requirement, the French were notified in advance by note of our withdrawal in each case. The procedure was not objected to by the Moroccan Government in its application to various prior U.S. withdrawals from other installations in Morocco, and it was therefore employed in the cases of Ben Guerir, Sidi Slimane, Nouasseur, and Kenitra.

With these withdrawals U.S. responsibility for the SAC bases in Morocco ceased. Any remaining problems concerning land ownership or compensation lie thus within the realm of French-Moroccan relations.

### 4. Conversion

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#### 4. Conversion of the Bases to Civilian Uses.

##### Background:

President Eisenhower answered affirmatively when King Mohamed V expressed the hope that the United States would assist Morocco in converting the bases, once evacuated by the U.S. forces, to civilian uses beneficial to the Moroccan economy. This was reaffirmed by President Kennedy to King Hassan last March in these terms:

"The President also confirmed the desire previously expressed by President Eisenhower to help the Moroccan Government, to every possible extent, to use these bases constructively." (Kennedy-Hassan Joint Communique, March 29, 1963.)

Various Moroccan Government officials starting as far back as 1959 have expressed hope that the bases, once in Moroccan hands, would be put to good use. They acknowledged privately that the Moroccan Government lacked the technicians to do this and hoped the United States Government would help. For internal political reasons Moroccan officials have been reluctant to become associated with us on questions involving the bases as long as they were operational. In 1963 Moroccan Government officials were particularly busy with elections on an almost one-a-month basis from April on. While these other demands on their attention may not have changed their views on base conversion, they effectively blocked any serious effort on the part of the various Moroccan ministries which would be involved in such conversion.

This Moroccan inability to come to grips with the problem of base conversion gave the U.S. agencies involved little choice: AID could not reimburse the Air Force for equipment not destined for some project; in the absence of reimbursement for equipment not excess to its needs the Air Force would be legally bound to remove it.

Nevertheless, the U.S. agencies involved have been active over a long period of time in trying to enlist GOM cooperation in devising ways to put the bases to use.

The most exhaustive U.S. approach to the base conversion problem was that prepared in March of 1962 by an AID-financed team of 12 U.S. experts which spent a month in Morocco. This report envisaged the expenditure of some \$16 million to be matched by an equivalent sum from the Moroccan Government. Education, technical training, agriculture, public health, light industry, and civil aviation all figured in the recommendations. This report was presented to the GOM in June of 1962 and is still without response. Funding and personnel problems undoubtedly deterred the GOM. The report itself recognizes that Morocco already has unfilled existing facilities for these types of training elsewhere in Morocco at installations that do not suffer from the relative remoteness that similar establishments on the bases would suffer from.

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Shortly after the King's return from his visit here last April and when it had become obvious the phasing-out of the SAC bases would proceed rapidly, a joint Air Force-AID team met several times with a GOM team for the purpose of facilitating the putting forward of projects. GOM attendance was desultory, its representatives uninstructed and not empowered to make decisions, and finally ceased to make themselves available at all. In the absence of GOM participation, the U.S. team members unilaterally made several suggestions for base utilization but these received no Moroccan response.

Conversion of Nouasseur:

Requirements for GOM Decisions: The only project which the GOM has indicated it intends to pursue on the bases is the establishment of an international civil airport at Nouasseur. Although the GOM indicated seriousness of purpose in this regard by its undertaking to include the equipment mentioned in its loan application, such loan application has not been received, despite AID urging and our indication that the FAA feasibility report made last July would constitute adequate documentation in support of such application. There has been a conflict within the Moroccan Public Works Ministry involving an existing airport nearer Casablanca and the development of Nouasseur which has apparently been responsible for the delay. Resolution of this conflict is expected momentarily.

Once the GOM presents its loan application, the USG will proceed to process it expeditiously, hopefully in time to let bids for work to terminate by July 1, 1964, a date which GOM delay admittedly is making less realistic.

Early meetings of the AID-AFE Development Financing Review Committee have paved the way for speedy processing of the loan application once received. An AID Loan Officer has visited Morocco recently to facilitate GOM preparation of the application for this and other loans, but has returned aware that the Moroccan planning conflict mentioned is blocking action. An FAA technician has been dispatched to Morocco to assist the GOM in the preparation of its application. He arrived in early December.

Equipment which ordinarily would have been removed by the USAF was retained for the conversion of Nouasseur into an international airport. The GOM was made aware of equipment present and agreed that \$656,000 for it would be part of a loan application to AID which the GOM would shortly make. This engagement to AID permitted the USAF to turn the equipment over to AID which then transferred it to the GOM. The utilities left at Nouasseur are part of this equipment.

Excess equipment was sold to private buyers under normal procedures until early in August 1963. However, in July GOM blocked removal of equipment purchased by private buyers from the largest of the three bases, Nouasseur. While negotiations to lift the embargo were going on, sales of excess property to the public were suspended. GOM finally agreed to purchase the remaining excess equipment itself at an agreed price which was comparable to the prices received from sales to the public. An agreement to this effect was signed October 5, 1963.

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U.S. Presence at Kenitra:

The United States Navy has approximately 2,200 officers and men, with dependents, currently in Morocco. Of these, 900 are involved in operating the two outlying communications sites at Bouknadel and Sidi Yahia. The remainder are being scaled down, based on numbers requisite for conduct of a training program in telecommunications and base operations, and assistance to the Moroccans in actually operating and maintaining Kenitra Base. It is anticipated that the Navy population at Kenitra Base will be reduced to 670 by 1 July 1964. As of December 16 no U.S. flags are being flown, U.S. personnel wear civilian clothes off base, and Marine-type fatigue uniforms when on service as interpreters with Moroccan guards at the gates. The Kenitra Base is being depicted as a training facility for Moroccan armed forces, with the outlying communications sites as support facilities for the U.S. personnel engaged in the Operation, Maintenance and Training program for Morocco. The extent of training has not been agreed upon, but Navy envisages the principal requirement will be for on-the-job apprentice training. The Navy's future commitment, based on the Kennedy-Hassan discussions, is limited annually to the value of the FY-63 O&M expenditure level (\$2.1 million) for the Kenitra complex, including Kenitra Base.

At the Kenitra ceremony, according to the Moroccan Press Service, Foreign Minister Guedira said:

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"The United States of America and Morocco have always been not only great friendly countries, united by common feelings of deep and real attachment to the principles of liberty, peace and democracy, but even a few months ago King Hassan had occasion to go to Washington to strengthen this friendship during discussions he had with President Kennedy. . . .

"Today at Kenitra, we are marking by this ceremony the beginning of an era of cooperation, active friendship and dynamic work for the cause of peace and security of all men and all people attached to peace, liberty, and democracy.

"We are inheriting a great base and we know that maybe we will not have the means to maintain it in the perfect state in which it has always been, but we know--and we have learned it from the mouths of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy--that we will have help of American technicians to assure its maintenance."

While there are certainly ample fields in which U.S. training to Moroccan military at Kenitra could be useful, so far the Moroccans have given no indication of the nature of the training they desire. The King told our Ambassador

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we would have to inform his military services of all of the details of the base and the number and kinds of technicians required. Further, the King said, we would have to take the initiative in arranging for appropriate people to be stationed at Kenitra to be able to make these plans themselves, indicating their arrival should be by stages.

Our Ambassador has suggested to COMNAVACTS that he think of ways in which he might suggest training programs to Moroccans in accordance with the King's request.

#### 6. Pilferage Problem:

In the closing days of U.S. presence, pilfering assumed significant proportions, attracted some U.S. press attention, and was brought to the attention of the Moroccan Government several times by our Embassy. On November 20 and again on December 9, the Embassy was instructed to approach the Foreign Office and point out that our responsibility to turn the bases over with their utilities in operable condition did not extend to cover damages from pilfering and trespass which the Moroccan army units alone could prevent. Several Moroccan officials indicated "proper measures" would be taken. No unhappiness over the bases' condition was made known at any transfer ceremony, but the King did express some dissatisfaction over their condition to the Ambassador. Before departure, the USAF took numerous photographs at the bases in order to establish a record of the condition in which they were left when the U.S. withdrew.

In the absence of valid U.S.-GOM agreed projects regarding the conversion of the bases, the U.S. commitment to the GOM was reduced to leaving the bases with their basic utilities intact and operating. This was done. The cost of basic utilities at Nouasseur are included in the \$656,000 which the Government of Morocco has agreed either to refund or to cover in its loan application for Nouasseur's civil airport. The basic utilities including \$202,000 in non-excess equipment have been left at Ben Guerir and Sidi Slimane by the Department of Defense. If the Moroccans decide to use these bases for military purposes, the Air Force will be reimbursed from MAP funds for the non-excess equipment. If not, other sources will be sought.

#### 7. Rental Guarantee Housing Contract:

In 1957 the USAF entered into a contract with a Moroccan company controlled by French interests (the "sponsor") to provide some 700 housing units to USAF personnel in return for a 10-year guarantee by the USAF that the sponsor would receive 95 percent of the rents due from full occupancy.

The guarantee is now paid up through September 30, 1963, with the next payment due April 30, 1964. In connection with future liability under the

guarantee

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guarantee contract, the Air Force has raised two questions with the sponsor: (1) whether it has complied with its contract obligation to make "every effort" to rent the houses to non-USAF tenants so as to reduce Air Force liability, and (2) whether the Moroccan company's interest in the land on which the project stands, which is leased from the Government of France, will be recognized by the Government of Morocco. It is recognized that in all probability the sponsor will be unable to lease these houses to Moroccans or to the GOM because of the remoteness of the bases. The company's representatives, who met with Air Force representatives in Washington in December, have undertaken to obtain documentary recognition from the GOM of the company's rights in the property until the guarantee contract expires in April 1967. The gross balance of the guarantee is \$2,621,430, which can probably be negotiated downward. The Air Force is attempting to negotiate the most advantageous deal possible for the U.S. Government in these circumstances.

#### 8. Conclusions:

Despite some unresolved details and possible problems ahead we believe that the situation surrounding our withdrawal and our chances of attaining the objectives we seek are generally favorable. Transfers of authority were smooth; there was minimal attendant publicity. The fact that our departure was on schedule is in itself likely to stifle criticism of those aspects of our withdrawal which may run counter to some Moroccan expectations. Morocco's own troubles with Algeria make it unlikely it would stir up additional problems which would undermine sympathy for their cause. Our principal objective, retention of the U.S. Naval forces in Kenitra to operate the communications facilities beyond the end of 1963, has been so far agreed to without challenge.

Several recent and significant expressions of interest in continued cooperation with us have also come forward. Foreign Minister Guedira declared at Kenitra, "We are making by this ceremony the beginning of an era of cooperation, active friendship and dynamic work for the cause of peace and security." Earlier in the day the King told our Ambassador the turnover ceremony would not mark the end of our relationship but a new phase and said he was sure we could work together in friendship.

Thus, on balance we are inclined to believe that the U.S. withdrawal from these installations in Morocco and the transfer of command at Kenitra were effected in good order.

On a broader plane, base conversion to civilian use in an underdeveloped country proved extremely difficult. Both our own procedures as well as Moroccan created problems. No commitments of like character should be made in the future without clear plans and agreed to sources of funding for property involved.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

April 5, 1963

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 232

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE ADMINISTRATOR, AGENCY FOR  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: Follow-up on King Hassan's Visit

The President was pleased by the careful preparations for King Hassan's visit but wants to be sure we tie up loose ends with equal care. He would like a report by 3 May from the Secretary of State in coordination with the Department of Defense and AID covering the following points:

1. How will we set up the military training program at Kenitra and what is the timetable for negotiating with the Moroccans?
2. How can we help the Moroccans plan suitable projects for the development loans we have promised?
3. How can we best fulfill our commitment to help the Moroccans convert the air bases at Sidi Slimane and Ben Guerir and prevent the conversion from dragging on unduly?
4. What is the timetable for converting Nouasseur to a civil airport? What steps remain to be taken?
5. How can we keep disposal of property on the air bases from becoming a serious irritant in US-Moroccan relations?
6. How can we build on the good feeling generated by the visit?

The President is also concerned that we take special pains to safeguard agreements reached on the future of our facilities at Kenitra. Unauthorized revelation to the press could seriously damage our relations with the King and the usefulness of these facilities.

*McGeorge Bundy*

McGeorge Bundy

cc: Kermit Gordon

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By 17 NARA, Date 11-16-99