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Case Study by JOHN V. HEDBERG

FIFTEENTH SEMINAR

SENIOR SEMINAR IN FOREIGN POLICY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



1972-73

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UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE AZORES

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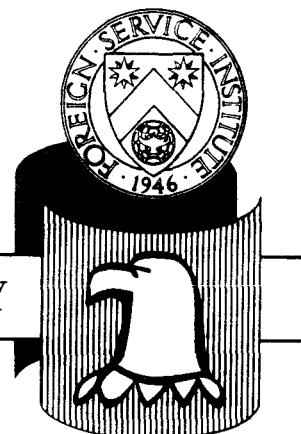
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FIFTEENTH SESSION

SENIOR SEMINAR IN FOREIGN POLICY

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GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE
DECLASSIFIED DECEMBER 31, 1979

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PREFACE

This case study was prompted by the fact that the current Executive Agreement with the Government of Portugal which permits the use of base rights and the positioning of U.S. military forces in the Azores expires on February 4, 1974. Formal negotiations with the Portuguese concerning a new agreement or an extension of the current agreement may be initiated as early as August of this year.

SUMMARY

For a period of almost thirty years the United States via a series of formal agreements with the Government of Portugal has had base rights and has stationed U.S. military forces in the Azores.

During World War II the use of facilities in the Azores was a major factor in successfully combating German submarine warfare in the Atlantic and was extremely valuable in transiting aircraft to and from Europe.

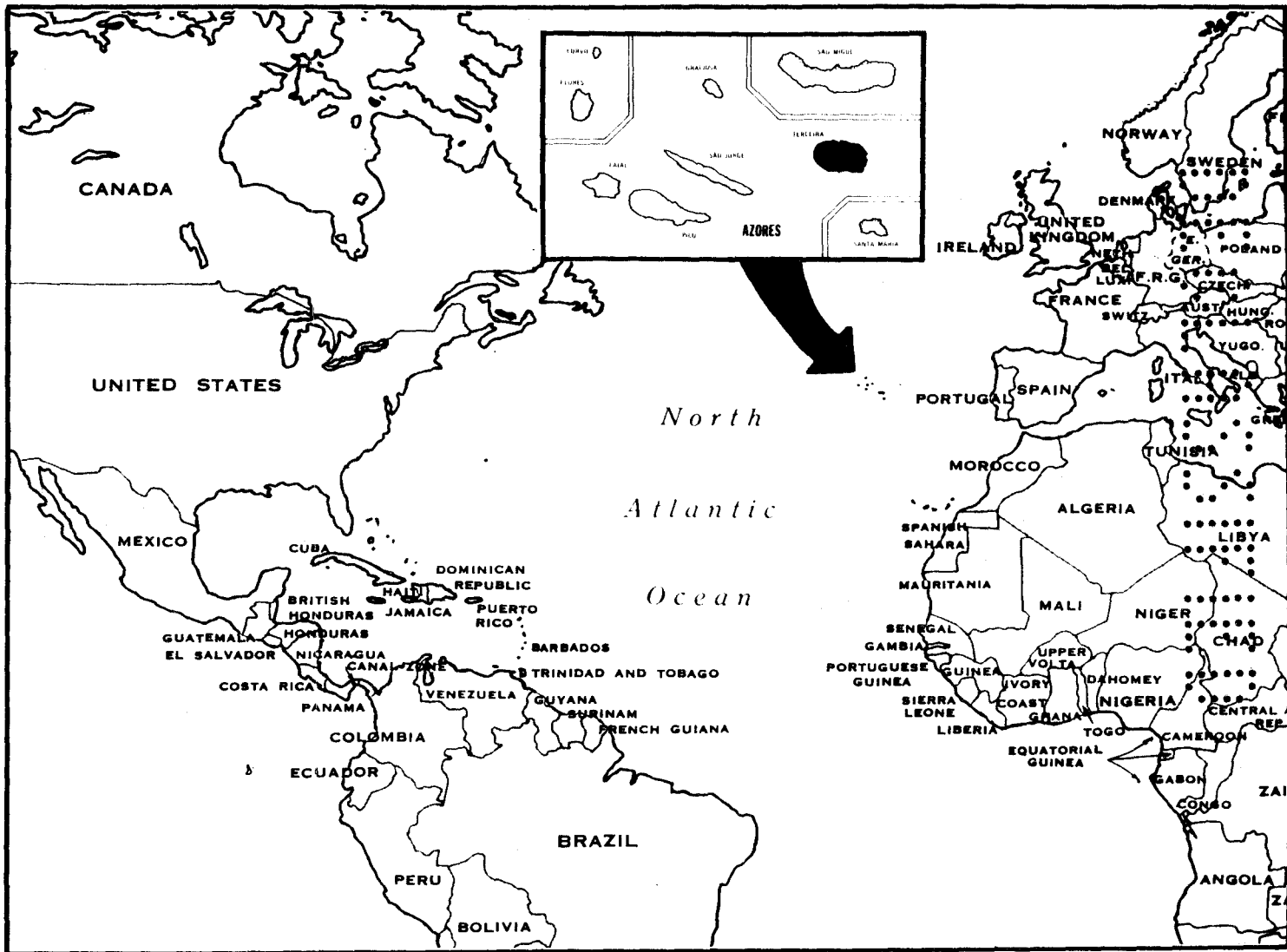
Since World War II the continuation of base rights and the positioning of U.S. forces has provided our military forces with a key base to perform a number of very critical missions.

It is my conclusion that our military missions at this strategic location is of extreme importance to our national security and it is in the best interest of our government to extend our current agreement with the Government of Portugal in order to maintain our facilities and continue these very important missions.

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BACKGROUND

The background-history of our formal agreements with the government of Portugal to station U.S. military forces in the Azores dates from January of 1944.

More specifically: During the height of World War II the United States and British forces determined that it was necessary to have a more strategic base of operations to combat more effectively the massive German submarine warfare in the Atlantic. When the senior commands decided that the Azores provided an ideal location, the British, after consulting with the Portuguese Government and utilizing a long standing diplomatic agreement, obtained permission from the Portuguese to position their forces and utilize facilities including the airfield on Terceira Island. The British forces arrived at Terceira in October of 1943 and established their base of operations at Lajes Field. Shortly thereafter, through a verbal agreement with the government of Portugal, a large contingent of U.S. Air Force joined the British as technical advisers and began using the base with the British forces.

In early January of 1944, through an exchange of formal notes with the government of Portugal, the United States was authorized to construct an Airfield and position forces on Santa Maria Island (approximately 30 minutes' flying time from Terceira). As the record will indicate these bases were extremely valuable and effective for antisubmarine warfare and transiting aircraft to and from Europe during 1944 and 1945.

In early 1946 the British removed its forces from the Azores and we transferred our total operations from Santa Maria to Terceira Island. Following the removal of U.S. Forces from Santa Maria, the facility there became and is now the principal Portuguese airport in the Azores.

In May of 1946, via an exchange of notes, the United States returned control of the Azores facilities to the government of Portugal, but retained transit rights for military aircraft including the right to station U.S. Military Forces at these facilities for a period of eighteen (18) months. On February 2, 1948 these rights were extended for an additional three-year period.

Our agreement and rights to continue using Lajes was strengthened in 1949 with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty and extended on September 6, 1951, when we signed with Portugal the Defense Agreement implementing the North Atlantic Treaty.

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CURRENT AGREEMENT - ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL

As indicated in the preceding section, the form of the current Executive Agreement is the exchange of letters (dated December 9, 1971) between Secretary Rogers and Foreign Minister Patricio.

Concurrently with this action, Secretary Rogers transmitted letters to Foreign Minister Patricio, which stipulated various forms of economic assistance to Portugal.

The assistance provided:

1. A PL-480 program that would make available agricultural commodities valued up to thirty million dollars during 1972 and 1973.
2. A grant of one million dollars to finance educational development projects.
3. Five million dollars in drawing rights of any non-military excess equipment over a period of two years.
4. The loan of the hydrographic vessel USNS KELLAR on a no-cost basis.
5. Export-Import Bank loans up to the amount of four hundred million dollars, financing for U.S. goods and service for development projects in Portugal.

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LAJES MISSIONS - PROGRAMS

In addition to their primary missions, our Military Forces at Lajes have the responsibility for the conduct of numerous other important activities and programs. These activities include (a) the operation of a long-range communication facility which provides an important linkage with our world-wide defense communications, (b) a weather reporting station for the mid-Atlantic basin, (c) air traffic control operations, (d) the operation of a port facility, (e) a large POL storage area, and (f) a storage compound for advanced underwater weapons.

The primary missions include:

I. ENROUTE SUPPORT OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT TRANSITING THE AZORES

The activities and the importance of this mission can be illustrated by the fact that approximately 250 aircraft per month transit our base at Lajes. The support for these aircraft includes refueling, as well as aircraft inspection, repair and/or replacement of parts if required.

In addition to providing enroute support for military aircraft proceeding to Europe and elsewhere, the base is ideal for orientation-training flights from various bases in the United States, for USAF Units and Air Reserve groups.

It should also be noted that Lajes is a key staging base for any contingency in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

II. ASW - ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE MISSION

This vitally important mission is conducted by the U.S. Navy ASW Sector Group utilizing Navy P-3 aircraft (a modified version of the commercial Lockheed Electra). Due to the geographical location of Lajes these aircraft cover a 1000 miles circle in the Atlantic basin. Surveillance of this area could not be accomplished from any other base of operation. The official records will indicate that this ASW group has continued to locate, identify and track submarines entering and operating through this area of responsibility.

It is significant to note that the three Soviet submarines which were "on station" off the U.S. east Coast in mid-April of this year were initially located and tracked when they were proceeding to the U.S. Coast through the ASW group area of responsibility at Lajes.

Reports to the ASW unit in Bermuda concerning this movement enabled the Bermuda unit to "pick up" surveillance immediately. It is also noteworthy that on April 17th of this year the ASW unit at Lajes located and tracked in their surveillance area two additional Soviet submarines that were obviously en route to the East Coast of the United States, either to relieve or augment the above-mentioned submarines.

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CURRENT STAFFING

As of April 1, 1973, the total personnel strength at Lajes (including U.S. and Portuguese civilian employees) numbered 2,875.

United States Air Force	995
United States Navy	350
United States Army	44
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Total Military:	1,389
U. S. Civilian Employees	149
Portuguese Civilians	1,337
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Total Civilian Employees:	1,486

United States dependents numbered 2,229. This figure includes 999 school-age children attending the American School at Lajes.

BUDGET - OPERATING COSTS

The budget operating costs of Lajes (all units) for this current fiscal year is approximately twelve million dollars:

Operations and Maintenance	\$6,593,700
Civilian Salaries	2,903,000
Supplies and Equipment	1,651,000
Contracts (Port Op.POL, Trans.)	890,600
<hr/> <hr/>	
	\$12,038,300

3. Request that the negotiations be held in Washington.
4. Early in the negotiations we should emphasize again that our presence and activities at Lajes is as important to Portugal as the United States and that the base continues to be important to NATO in which Portugal has an obligation to support.

5. Every effort should be made to have a new agreement or an extension of the current agreement for a period of no less than five years.

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