


091 TRIPOLITANIA

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LIST OF PAPERS

FILE NO. 091 TRIPOLITANIA

NO.	FROM	DATE	TO	SYNOPSIS
	U. S. SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE DISPOSITION			F TRIPOLITANIA.



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091  
*Tripolitania*

SWN-4156  
16 April 1946

VFF:aj

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE:

Subject: U.S. Security Interests in the Disposition of Tripolitania.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have requested the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee to transmit the following as an expression of their views concerning U.S. security interests in the disposition of Tripolitania:

"1. In response to your request of 12 April an appraisal has been made of the problem arising from Soviet demands for a unilateral trusteeship of Tripolitania, and its implications relative to the security interests of the United States.

"2. On 13 March 1946 the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to you a memorandum on "U.S. Security Interests in the Eastern Mediterranean" (SWN-4018, 14 March 1946). This memorandum concerned itself primarily with Soviet demands upon Turkey and concluded that acceptance of these demands would be contrary to the security interests of the U.S. In it, notably in paragraphs 6, 7, 8, and 9, are discussions of the broader security implications of Soviet ambitions, which apply with equal validity to and should be re-read in the light of a proposition which would give the USSR any control of Tripolitania, or for that matter, of the Dodecanese. Although this control, it is true, has been asked for in the form of a trusteeship under the United Nations, the effectiveness of future international restraint upon unilateral action by the Soviets might develop to be slight, particularly when one remembers the unfortunate precedent of the conversion by Japan to her virtual sovereignty of the Pacific islands entrusted to her as mandates after World War I.

"3. Also considered in arriving at the conclusions hereinafter stated has been the memorandum to

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the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the Department of State, dated 6 April 1946, a "Political Estimate of Soviet Policy for use in connection with Military Studies" (SWN-4125, 5 April 1946). The basic political assumption stated therein is considered a most important determinant in the matter of Tripolitania. This assumption is: "As long as present Soviet policies and attitude in regard to other countries continue unchanged, the U.S. must accept the fact that it is confronted with the threat of an expanding totalitarian state which continues to believe and act on the belief that the world is divided into two irreconcilably hostile camps; i. e., Soviet and non-Soviet."

"4. Tripolitania, as it is understood to be demanded by the Soviets, includes the provinces of Tripoli, Misurata, and the western half of the military district of interior Libya. It has an area of approximately 360,000 square miles, mostly desert. The total population is probably about 700,000 natives and perhaps 30,000 Europeans, most of the latter being Italians. The only large cities are Tripoli with a population of 100,000 in 1938 and Misurata with a population of about 45,000. Tripoli is the only port with modern harbor facilities and protection for sea-going craft. There is no industry worthy of consideration except agriculture in its various forms.

"5. In pressing their demands for Tripolitania, the Soviets have everything to gain and nothing to lose, except perhaps a momentary and relatively unimportant loss of prestige in case they fail in their objective. The most important specific reason for earnest Soviet effort to obtain control of Tripolitania might be to place the USSR in a strategic position athwart the vital British line of communications through the Mediterranean to Near East oil, India and the Orient. With Tripolitania as a base on the south, and with Albania and Yugoslavia available, aircraft and submarines could be directed with great effect against this line of communications. Few threats which could be posed by the USSR would be more effective in weakening British prestige and promoting the dissolution of

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the British Empire. Additional reasons might be:

"a. To gain precedent for expansion of direct Soviet influence beyond the 'security sphere' contiguous to the borders of the USSR, thus accustoming world opinion to the idea of Soviet territorial interests other than close to the homeland. Specifically this precedent could be utilized to further Soviet expansion in the Dardanelles, Eastern Turkey and the Dodecanese.

"b. To permit an 'enlightened' treatment of the native population, which might deliberately be conducted at no initial gain to the USSR, or even at some cost, with a view to gaining favor with the Arab world while embarrassing those powers whose commitments in the area are greater and who, probably, could not compete on equal terms with Soviet generosity.

"c. To acquire, in the long term, a focus for Soviet political infiltration in Africa, a base for possible military incursions, and a spearhead for entry into the vast, unexploited resources of Africa, included in which are the uranium deposits of the Congo.

"d. To create a situation whereby Italy and also Greece would be placed between Soviet pincers.

"e. To create, in the event of failure to obtain the Tripolitanian trusteeship, a more favorable argument for securing rights in other areas such as the Dodecanese; a better solution, from the Soviet standpoint, to the Venezia Giulia settlement; and a precedent against the establishment of unilateral trusteeship elsewhere.

"f. An analysis of the above points from the military standpoint indicates that each is potentially inimical, to a greater or less degree, to the long-range security interests and the over-all objectives of the United States. Taken together with the broader implications discussed in the Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum of 13 March (referred to in paragraph 2 above) the inevitable conclusion is reached that under no circumstances should the United States accede to the Soviet demand for unilateral control of Tripolitania. This conclusion is reinforced by two additional factors:

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"a. In the unfortunate but conceivable eventuality of war between this country and the USSR, a Soviet foothold in North Africa would greatly complicate the task of stopping the initial Soviet advance and make more difficult the strategy involved in carrying the war into the Soviet homeland. Such a foothold places a pincer on the Eastern Mediterranean, which greatly lessens British capability to hold Suez, further weakens Turkey, poses a continual threat to Tunisia and the narrows of the Mediterranean at Sicily, lessens the security to us of French North Africa, and, specifically, would seriously impair what would otherwise be our capabilities in sea and air operations at the beginning of hostilities.

"b. It is hardly conceivable that Great Britain would accede to the Soviet demand for Tripolitania, no matter what position was taken by the United States. A divergence between the positions held by the United States and Britain could well produce a schism between the two countries which might destroy in large part the power potential of the non-Soviet states, by means short of war, to enforce a stop to Soviet expansion, or, at least, greatly to deter it.

"c. It is understood that the Soviets are basing claims for Tripolitania in part on the need for a southern Mediterranean harbor for the merchant marine they wish to develop. There appears no reason why, under any disposition of Tripolitania, the one modern harbor, Tripoli, should not be available to Soviet commercial shipping equally with the shipping of all other nations. Hence this argument is considered specious.

"d. There are for consideration, from the military point of view, the possible repercussions resulting from the refusal of the United States and other nations concerned to grant the USSR their demands with regard to Tripolitania. These repercussions might include demands for rights in the Dodecanese, refusal to accept other than the Yugoslav solution to the Venezia Giulia problem, or refusal to agree with the other powers concerned on any peace treaty with Italy. On these points the following comments are offered:

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"a. As to possible Soviet demands for rights in the Dodecanese a number of the same inimical results to United States and United Nations security interests would accrue as would arise from the granting of Soviet control over Tripolitania. Neither area can be classed as more critical from the long-range point of view, and demands for either should be considered as impossible of granting. In the short run, however, the control by the USSR of areas in the Dodecanese would be at least as disturbing militarily as their control of Tripolitania, since they would be able to consolidate the Dodecanese rapidly, and this area poses an immediate threat to Suez and isolates Turkey.

"b. As to the Venezia Giulia matter, direct military considerations involved in the precise location of the Italo-Yugoslav boundary, excluding the question of Trieste, are relatively unimportant. Granting Trieste to Yugoslavia would lessen the cost to the USSR of military penetration into the Adriatic, and would certainly diminish U.S. and Western European influence in Italy, but denying that port to Soviet use would not prevent such penetration through Fiume and elsewhere through bilateral arrangements with Yugoslavia. It is understood that a political evaluation by the State Department indicates that the inclusion of Trieste inside the Yugoslav boundary might cause the present Italian Government to fall and be succeeded by one of strongly Communistic affiliations. Such a chain of events would adversely affect the security interests of the United States. It also appears desirable to maintain Trieste as a free port, open for the use of Austria and Central Europe. We should, of course, strive to avoid the establishment of any peacetime Soviet bases in the Adriatic in so far as this is possible. In regard to the Venezia Giulia problem generally, so long as Trieste is not given Yugoslavia there are no important military objections to compromise in its settlement if such be deemed helpful in reaching agreement to the Italian treaty.

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"g. As to the possible refusal of the USSR to join with other powers concerned in signing a peace treaty with Italy, giving as a reason the Tripolitanian matter, the military impact of this would include a continuation of the unsettled conditions with regard to the USSR, possible continuation of the combined U.S.-British Military Government commitment in Venezia Giulia, with an attendant requirement for retention of U.S. forces in Italy. There is no reason to believe that world conditions would be any more settled with an agreed peace treaty signed with Italy, if it involved Russian control of Tripolitania, than under some other solution. With regard to the possible continuation of the military government requirements and retention of U.S. troops in Italy, the military goal is not simply the withdrawal of U.S. forces, although that is most desirable. The true aim is the creation of conditions satisfactory to the United States, under which U.S. troops are no longer required in the area. To this end, it is desirable that a real solution be sought which will permit the termination of our commitments, even if this necessitates some compromise in the final establishment of the Yugoslav boundary in the Venezia Giulia area.

"9. In recapitulation:

"a. To accede to Soviet demands for a unilateral trusteeship over Tripolitania would be gravely inimical to the security interests of the United States.

"b. The same is true with regard to the Dodecanese.

"c. So long as Trieste is not given to Yugoslavia, there are no military implications of importance in the fixing of the precise boundary of Yugoslavia in Venezia Giulia."

For the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee:

H. FREEMAN MATTHEWS,  
Acting Chairman

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

*File 091 - Tripolitania*



**TOP SECRET**

SM-5519  
16 April 1946

MEMORANDUM FOR THE STATE-WAR-NAVY COORDINATING COMMITTEE:

Subject: U.S. security interests in the disposition of Tripolitania.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that the enclosed memorandum be forwarded to the Secretary of State as an expression of their views concerning U.S. security interests in the disposition of Tripolitania.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

**SWNCC SECRETARIAT**

- State Member .....
- Army Member .....
- Navy Member .....
- Ass't State Member .....
- Ass't Navy Member .....
- Ass't Army Member .....
- Executive Secretary .....
- Ass't Exec. Secretary .....
- State Adm. Assistant .....
- Army Adm. Assistant .....
- Navy Adm. Assistant .....
- File .....

*A. J. McFarland*  
A. J. McFARLAND,  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army,  
Secretary.

Enclosure.

APR 16 1946



STATE WAR & NAVY COORDINATING  
COMMITTEE

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*Tripolitania*TOP SECRETE N C L O S U R EMEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

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2. On 13 March 1946 the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to you a memorandum on "U.S. Security Interests in the Eastern Mediterranean". <sup>(SWN-4018 14 Mar 46)</sup> This memorandum concerned itself primarily with Soviet demands upon Turkey and concluded that acceptance of these demands would be contrary to the security interests of the U.S. In it, notably in paragraphs 6, 7, 8, and 9, are discussions of the broader security implications of Soviet ambitions, which apply with equal validity to and should be reread in the light of a proposition which would give the USSR any control of Tripolitania, or for that matter, of the Dodecanese. Although this control, it is true, has been asked for in the form of a trusteeship under the United Nations, the effectiveness of future international restraint upon unilateral action by the Soviets might develop to be slight, particularly when one remembers the unfortunate precedent of the conversion by Japan to her virtual sovereignty of the Pacific islands entrusted to her as mandates after World War I.

3. Also considered in arriving at the conclusions hereinafter stated has been the memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the Department of State, dated 6 April 1946, a "Political Estimate of Soviet Policy for use in connection with Military Studies". <sup>(SWN-4125 5 April 46)</sup> The basic political assumption stated therein is considered a most important determinant in the matter of



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