

286. Memorandum From the Director of the Office of Northern Affairs Affairs, Eastern and Central African Section, Bureau of State for African Affairs Penfield

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SUBJECT

U.S. Position in UNHCR Executive Committee on Assistance to Algerian Refugees

I understand a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Refugees of which you are a member, has been called by Mr. Hanes for January 19. The above subject will be one of the agenda items, and a paper similar to the attached draft "Memorandum for the Record" will be circulated as the basis for discussion.²

We in AFN have followed the Algerian refugee problem quite closely and believe the draft paper, with its suggested U.S. position is a reasonable and fair document. EUR, which is, of course, the bureau most apt to turn this discussion into a problem, so far has been most reasonable on the overall subject. We understand their only complaint on this document—to date—is to the effect that recommendation #5 should be amended to provide that prior discussions take place with interested *governments* rather than *delegations*. We have informally concurred with this idea on the theory that if the French are going to be difficult or if the Tunisians have any surprises in store, the U.S. is better off knowing the true situation as much before the meeting as possible.

The Tunisians have not made a great display out of the refugees and have been relatively undemonstrative about the assistance we have given to date. However, there is no doubt that the GOT is extremely concerned about the possible threat the refugees could pose if they became truly discontented and is grateful for our aid. The number of refugees is quite large in comparison with the Tunisian population and the FLN, we believe, is helping supervise the major refugee groups. GOT officials seem to have the situation in hand. But if major disorders erupted, a definite possibility would exist for an open clash between the FLN and GOT troops, with all the additional uproar this would create in the Maghreb. A U.S. contribution of \$250,000, plus the endorsement of a wide appeal for assistance from

¹ Source: Department of State, AFN Files, Lot 65 D 178. Confidential. Drafted, Buckle and cleared by Dolgin. The source text bears Dolgin's handwritten notation: Penfield "JKP". Mr. Satterthwaite signed the program approval for the \$250,000. W/MSC now trying to find the money.

² Not found.