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JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SEIZURE OR PEACEFUL OCCUPATION OF THE AZORES

Note by the Secretaries

The attached study prepared by the Joint War Plans Committee is circulated for the consideration of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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Joint Secretariat.

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SEIZURE OR PEACEFUL OCCUPATION OF THE AZORES

Report by Joint War Plans Committee

1. A study to determine the merits and possibilities of a seizure of the AZORES either peacefully or by an occupation through force is contained in Enclosure "A." A brief thereof is set forth below.

2. The utilization of air and naval bases in the AZORES will contribute materially to meeting the U-boat threat by providing VLR land-based aircraft cover for the presently uncovered areas of the central North ATLANTIC.

3. The AZORES consist of a group of 9 islands. The three most important, SAN MIGUEL, TERCEIRA, and FAYAL, contain the majority of the population of 260,000. Level stretches of land are the exception. Landing beaches are scarce. The islands all have circumferential road systems but movement over the interior in most areas must be on foot.

4. There are two artificial harbors, PONTA DELGADA on SAN MIGUEL ISLAND, and HORTA on FAYAL ISLAND, which accommodate a limited number of vessels. Anchorage, exposed to the seaward, for large vessels can be found at PONTA DELGADA, HORTA, and ANGRA. It is estimated that the addition of the necessary floating maintenance and repair facilities sufficient to support 20 DE's would tax all port capacities to the maximum.

5. Two military airfields now exist on the islands, which should be capable of supporting VLR aircraft operations within 15 days of occupation. Additional sites are available for development.

6. Average weather conditions present no bar to the operation of land-based aircraft from the AZORES.

7. Portuguese armed forces in the AZORES are the best of the nation, but are lightly armed and equipped with obsolete aircraft. It is felt that their resistance to a well-balanced aggressive

force would be ineffective. They consist of:

Ground:	25,700 troops.
Air:	41 obsolete aircraft.
Naval:	2 DD's.

8. A peaceful utilization of the AZORES as an air and naval base would be preferable to an occupation by force. If peaceful negotiations should fail, preparations must be complete for an immediate occupation by force.

9. SPAIN'S reaction to either a peaceful or forced occupation of the AZORES would probably be the same, in either case reflecting apprehension for her position in the CANARY ISLANDS and resulting in diplomatic protests.

10. AXIS reaction to either a peaceful or forced occupation of the AZORES would probably result in strong blasts of propaganda pointing to our violation of the precepts of the ATLANTIC Charter. The likelihood of air attacks on PORTUGAL and attacks on Portuguese shipping would be less if the occupation were forced.

11. PORTUGAL'S price for a peaceful entry to the AZORES might consist of requests for additional economic aid, military supplies, and equipment, as well as protection by UNITED NATIONS armed forces. In the event of a forced occupation, she might seek reparation in terms of such aid, supplies, and protection. No full break with the UNITED NATIONS is anticipated.

12. It is estimated that the following would be required for an occupation by force:

Ground:	1 Division, Reinforced (Amphibiously trained).
Air:	1 Carrier Group, 36 F and 36 DB.
Naval:	2 BB, 1 CV, 2 CA or CL, 23 DD, 15 APA, 5 AKA.

This force to effect landings on FAYAL and TERCEIRA ISLANDS simultaneously, and subsequently to reduce SAN MIGUEL ISLAND.

13. The advantages to be obtained in utilizing the AZORES as an air base from which to combat the submarine menace, greatly outweigh the disadvantages which would accrue to their occupation.

ENCLOSURE "A"

SEIZURE OR PEACEFUL OCCUPATION
OF THE AZORES

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

1. Anti-submarine campaign.

An important weapon in the anti-submarine campaign is the VLR aircraft. The operation of this type of airplane from presently available bases should become highly effective late in the summer of 1943, and force the U-boat to areas that are out of range of bases now at our disposal. If the AZORES could be used as a base for VLR aircraft, the UNITED STATES-UNITED KINGDOM convoys could be re-routed through areas with more desirable flying weather, thus obtaining improved coverage. The UNITED STATES-NORTH AFRICA, and TRINIDAD-UNITED KINGDOM convoys could also follow routes along which they would receive complete cover. (See Appendix "A"). A considerable time would be required to place the AZORES bases in full operation after they are obtained. Therefore, early action is necessary if these bases are to be used during the critical periods in 1943.

2. Use of AZORES as aircraft ferrying staging point.

The possible use of air base facilities in the AZORES as a staging point for ferrying of long range aircraft to the UNITED KINGDOM, NORTH AFRICA, INDIA, and the FAR EAST should be borne in mind. The following comparative distances are significant:

MIAMI-NATAL-CASABLANCA	7,213 statute miles
NEW YORK-BOTWOOD-AZORES-CASABLANCA	3,881 statute miles

- a saving of 46%.

ESTIMATE

3. General

a. The AZORES are a group of 9 islands with a distance of about 400 miles between the extreme islands, SANTA MARIA and FLORES. (See Appendix "B"). The largest island of the group is SAN MIGUEL, 40 miles long and 10 miles in width at the widest part. The islands have a population of approximately 260,000, congregated mostly on the only islands of importance in the group, SAN MIGUEL, TERCEIRA, and FAYAL. There are reputed to be more AZOREANS in the UNITED STATES than there are in the AZORES, as a result of which the people of the islands have strong economic and blood ties with their people who have emigrated to this country. However, the military forces in the AZORES come from PORTUGAL, so that bonds of understanding which exist between the people of the UNITED STATES and the AZORES do not extend to the armed forces of the islands.

b. The islands are volcanic in origin. All are rugged and hilly, with deep, narrow valleys. The maximum elevation throughout the islands is 7600 feet. Level stretches of land are the exception rather than the rule. Landing beaches are scarce. Movement over most of the interior of the islands must be on foot, although all of the islands have circumferential road systems capable of handling two-way normal traffic. Most of the roads, due to numerous defiles and a few bridges, could be blocked temporarily. Water is abundant in the coastal areas of the islands except on FAYAL where, during the summer, it is scarce and at all times is sufficient only for the local population. At HORTA is situated the principal cable station of the mid-Atlantic. SAN MIGUEL is served by an indifferent telephone system.

4. Ports

There are only two all-weather ports in the AZORES, PONTA DELGADA on SAN MIGUEL ISLAND, and HORTA on FAYAL ISLAND. Both are artificial harbors, accommodating a limited number of vessels. Anchorage for large vessels at PONTA DELGADA, HORTA, and ANGRA is ample in size for all practicable purposes, but exposed to seaward. Total cargo capacity of all ports is about 1750 tons daily, mostly by lighter. Existing repair facilities are based entirely on local needs. It is estimated that no operating naval vessels of DE size or larger could base on the AZORES without adding to existing maintenance and repair facilities, and that the addition of floating maintenance and repair facilities sufficient to support 20 DE's would tax all port capacities to the maximum.

5. Airfields

a. An analysis of suitable air field sites follows:

<u>Island</u>	FAYAL	TERCEIRA	SAN MIGUEL	SAN MARIA
<u>Location</u>	FETEIRAS	LAGENS	SANTA ANA (RABO de PEIXE)	AREIAS
<u>Status</u>	Projected	Operational	Operational	Projected
<u>Class</u>	Emergency	Military	Military	Military

Runways

NW-SE:6000'x600'

NNW-SSE:4800'x400' NW-SE:4900'x300'

WNW-ESE:4500'x250' E-W:3900'x300'

NW-SE:3900'x300' NE-SW: 3700'x300'

NNE-SSW:2500'x210' N-S:2800'x300'

Now suitable
for the type
indicated

B(M),B(C), F,
C/T

B(M), B(L), F,
C/T

	PAYAL	TERCEIRA	SAN MIGUEL	SAN MARIA
Can be made suitable for the types indicated in the number of days shown, by the work noted.	Utilities Aircraft 60 days Continued grading, construction of base facilities, graveling, metalling or steel matting surface.	All types 30 days Construction of hard standings, taxi ways, additional base facilities and extension and surfacing of existing runways.	Unknown ----- Some additional construction probably required.	All types 120 days Complete construction required. Reputed to be best site in Islands.

b. The above analysis indicates that initial operations of VLR aircraft from LAGENS air field in TERCEIRA ISLAND may be expected about 15 days after occupation. One squadron of 12 VLR aircraft can be accommodated initially. Estimated maximum capacity is 3 to 4 squadrons in 90 days with 1/2 fighter squadron. The capacity of SANTA ANA field (RABO de PEIXE) on SAN MIGUEL ISLAND for VLR aircraft is undetermined pending a definite survey of expansion possibilities.

6. Weather

The average temperature varies from 73° F. during the summer to about 58° F. in the winter. Fogs are infrequent, although there is sometimes a haze which reduces visibility. There is much cloudy weather from November to April. During this period the clouds form and persist mostly on the windward side of the islands. There are no indications that any weather conditions, except gales which may be expected occasionally, would interfere with the operation of land-based planes.

7. Enemy forces

a. Ground forces in the AZORES total 25,700, distributed as follows (See Appendix "B"):

(1) SAN MIGUEL ISLAND - 15,900, consisting of 3 infantry regiments, a total of 12,500 men, plus various artillery, engineer, and service units, totaling 3,400 men. Artillery consists of 3-6" coast defense guns, 10 French 75's, 5 - 120 mm.'s in emplacements, 12-105 mm. howitzers, and 8 Vickers 3.7 in.

(2) FAYAL ISLAND - 4,000 troops, consisting of 1 infantry regiment, 1 artillery regiment, plus engineer and service units. Artillery consists of 2 - 6" coast defense guns, 4 French 75's, 2 - 75 mm. field guns, and 4 Vickers 3.7 in.

(3) TERCEIRA ISLAND - 5,800 troops, consisting of 1 infantry and 1 artillery regiment, plus engineer and service units. Artillery consists of 3 French 75's, 4 other field guns, probably 75's, and 6 Vickers 3.7 in.

b. Aircraft in the AZORES total 41 obsolete planes. On SAN MIGUEL there are 13 Gladiator fighters, 2 Grumman amphibians, and 12 Grumman G44's. on TERCEIRA there are 14 Gladiators.

c. Naval forces on the AZORES total 2 destroyers, based at PONTA DELGADA.

PEACEFUL OCCUPATION BY NEGOTIATION

8. It is preferable to secure the use of the airfields and harbors of the AZORES by negotiation rather than by seizure. Nevertheless, all preparations necessary for Military occupation should be complete when negotiations are initiated so that occupation may follow immediately if negotiations fail.

9. Granting Portuguese acquiescence to an occupation, it is believed that SPAIN would register a protest and would become apprehensive of her position in the CANARY ISLANDS. Assurances on the part of GREAT BRITAIN and the UNITED STATES, given simultaneously with the occupation, should assist in countering these fears. It is believed that no overt act on the part of SPAIN need be anticipated. Any negotiations which would involve the employment of UNITED NATIONS forces in PORTUGAL would be unacceptable.

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10. The AXIS probably would react by propaganda, devoted to the theme that the Portuguese consent was forced, together with comments on the violation of weaker nations in direct contradiction to the precepts of the ATLANTIC Charter. Reprisals against the Portuguese in the form of bombing raids on PORTUGAL and attacks on shipping are considered to be the maximum measures which the AXIS can take. These are unlikely as they would tend to drive the Portuguese further into the UNITED NATIONS camp. Such reprisals, or their threat would, however, undoubtedly result in demands by PORTUGAL upon the UNITED NATIONS for anti-submarine and anti-aircraft protection and materiel.

11. The garrison required for a peaceful entry of the AZORES should consist of troops to operate the air bases and radar installations plus the necessary airdrome defense battalions. These units would be augmented initially by the construction units.

OCCUPATION BY FORCE

12. General.

a. The Military occupation of the AZORES, as an alternative to acquiring the desired bases by negotiations, will require that an amphibious force be in readiness for an immediate seizure. This step will require a larger garrison force than would a peaceful entry.

b. The traditional British friendship and alliance with PORTUGAL might be severed if British forces were employed in the seizure of the AZORES. The UNITED NATIONS will desire to retain certain privileges in PORTUGAL. To insure the retention of diplomatic relations with at least one member of the UNITED NATIONS it would seem desirable for an occupation in force to be made by the UNITED STATES. The use of Brazilian troops with the UNITED STATES forces does not appear sound. The ethnological ties between BRAZIL and PORTUGAL might

jeopardize the negotiations and the operation; some Brazilians would undoubtedly inform the Portuguese. In view of these considerations, it appears that only UNITED STATES forces should be employed in the seizure of the AZORES.

c. The Portuguese forces in the AZORES probably would offer only slight resistance, and although PORTUGAL would make strong protests against our action, a break with all the UNITED NATIONS or adherence to the AXIS, is considered unlikely.

d. The Spanish and AXIS reactions would probably be identical to those which would occur as a result of a peaceful occupation. There would be less likelihood of AXIS reprisals.

13. Concept of the Operation.

a. Simultaneous ship-to-shore landings under carrier-based air cover with naval gun support to be effected on PAYAL and TERCEIRA ISLANDS with objectives as follows (See Appendix "B"):

(1) On PAYAL:

To seize the cable and radio facilities and secure the harbor at HORTA.

(2) On TERCEIRA:

To seize, secure, and place in operation the airfield at LAGENS.

b. Subsequent to the above, to eliminate resistance on and occupy SAN MIGUEL ISLAND, to secure and place in operation the airfield at RABO de PEIXE, and the harbor at PONTA DELGADA.

14. Forces required.

a. It is estimated that the following will be required for an occupation of the AZORES by force:

Ground:	1 Division, Reinforced (amphibiously trained).
Air:	1 Carrier Group, 36 fighters, 36 dive bombers.
Naval:	2 BB, 1 CV, 2 CA or CL, 23 DD, 15 APA, 5 AKA.

The above force may appear to be excessive but it is felt that such a show of strength will induce the defenders to offer limited resistance only, and that the provision of the force listed will permit occupation with the minimum loss of life and materiel.

b. It is estimated that the force indicated below should be available initially for a garrison:

Ground: 1 Division, Reinforced.

Air: 1 Fighter Squadron.
1 A/S Squadron (VLR).

Naval: 6 173' PG's.

Local HD craft as required.

c. After the situation has been clarified, it is believed that the ground force garrison could be reduced to the equivalent of a reinforced regimental combat team.

ADVANTAGES

15. The UNITED NATIONS will have a base from which anti-submarine air protection can be provided for the remaining portions of the presently unprotected areas of the principal ATLANTIC convoy routes.

16. The occupation by the UNITED NATIONS will deny the islands to the enemy as possible minor clandestine submarine refueling stations.

DISADVANTAGES

17. Reaction to the occupation of the AZORES without PORTUGAL'S consent will possibly result in unfavorable political repercussions in that country and in SPAIN.

18. Occupation of the AZORES with PORTUGAL'S consent might invite AXIS reprisals resulting in demands by PORTUGAL upon the UNITED NATIONS for anti-submarine and anti-aircraft protective measures and materiel.

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19. Occupation of the AZORES with PORTUGAL's consent will probably invite unfavorable political repercussions in SPAIN.

CONCLUSIONS

20. The utilization of air and naval bases in the AZORES will contribute materially to meeting the U-boat threat by providing VLR land-based aircraft cover for the presently uncovered areas of the central north ATLANTIC.

21. The UNITED STATES should proceed immediately to prepare a force to seize the AZORES in the face of armed resistance.

22. If the negotiations for a peaceful entry fail, the UNITED STATES should proceed at once to occupy the AZORES and establish air and naval bases thereon required to meet the submarine menace.

23. If permission is granted for a peaceful occupation, the required construction and garrison forces should be immediately dispatched to prepare and secure the necessary air and naval bases in the AZORES.



APPENDIX B

A T L A N T I C

GRACIOSA

EXERCISE FORCE

3,900
3 - 8" C.D.
5 - 75 mm.
4 - 3.7 in.
4 - Other field
guns.

SAN JORGE

TERCEIRA

Logos

EXERCISE FORCE

4,000
2 - 8" C.D.
6 - 75 mm.
4 - 3.7 in.

PRIAL

HORVA

Fajal

SIMULTANEOUS LANDINGS

SUBSEQUENT LANDINGS

O C E A N

EXERCISE FORCE

15,900
3 - 8" C.D.
10 - 75 mm.
5 - 180 mm.
12 - 100 mm.
8 - 3.7 in.

SAN MIGUEL

Ponte Delgada

SANTA MARIA

Arco

DISTANCES BETWEEN ISLANDS

Corvo to Santa Maria 345 mi.
Flores to Fayal 150 mi.
Fayal to San Miguel 178 mi.
Terceira to San Miguel 104 mi.

LEGEND

- Ports
- Air fields
- Projected airfields

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By R
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