

ALGERIA

The history of modern Algeria began on "Halloween Night", October 31, 1954. A handful of young idealists had decided that open rebellion against France was the only way justice would ever come to their countrymen. Their movement was called the National Liberation Front (FLN). They issued a leaflet stating that their aim was the restoration of a sovereign Algerian state. In it they advocated social democracy within an Islamic framework. They denounced the puppet leadership of Messali Hadj. And, they demanded that all residents of Algeria be given the same rights and responsibilities under the law. They stated how Algeria had fallen behind the other Arab states in emancipating itself both socially and nationally. They announced this would be remedied, but only after a difficult and prolonged struggle. Their plan of battle was a matter of general public knowledge. There was to be guerrilla resistance within the country combined with diplomatic offensives abroad. The United Nations was to be a major battlefield. The support of Arab countries and other member states would be useful there. The FLN military arm was to undermine the colonial administration by fomenting violent public demonstrations and by aggressive raiding, ambushes, sabotage, and assassination.

The first outbreak of fighting was militarily ineffective. It led to the arrest of some 2,000 persons, most of whom, in fact, had not been part of the rebellion. In June, 1955 governor-general Jacques Soustelle attempted to placate the resistance without success. On August 20 there was another rising at Aïn Abid and at the mine of Al-Alia. This became a massacre of Europeans, followed by summary executions of Muslims. In January 1956 came the electoral victory of the Republican Front in France. The new premier, Guy Mollet, appointed the moderate General Georges Catroux as governor-general. On a visit to Algiers, Mollet was pelted with tomatoes by the local Europeans. Catroux withdrew and was replaced by the pugnacious Socialist Robert Lacoste. Lacoste advocated brutal repression and a French army of 500,000 men was sent to Algeria. Attempts to paralyze the administration by terrorism were met by brutal French counter-terrorism in the form of the Foreign Legion Parachute battalion (The REP). Instances of torture, murder, and other atrocities were common on both sides.

In May 1958 thousands of European Algerians rose up in collusion with local French army commanders. They called for the integration of Algeria with France. The resulting political crisis swept de Gaulle back into the French presidency. The return of de Gaulle seemed to appeal to Muslims and Europeans generally, and the situation became one of hopeful optimism. But when de Gaulle arrived in Algiers, it became clear that he did not support integration. Instead, he granted full civil rights to the native population and launched a plan to provide adequate schools and medical services for Muslims, create jobs, and introduce Muslims into high administrative positions. Lastly, he declared his support for Algerian "self-determination" and independence from France. This resulted in several furious, but ineffective, uprisings on the part of the European "Pied Noir"* supported by high-ranking army officers. In May 1961, negotiations were opened in France with representatives of the GPRA (The Algerian provisional government in exile). This body had long been recognized by the Arab and communist states, but had never met on Algerian soil. Settler opposition was organized into the "Secret Army" organization (OAS). Terrorism returned.

In spite of the OAS and violent outbursts of fighting, a referendum was held in Algeria on July 1, 1962 by the provisional government, confirming the desire for independence. French aid would continue. Europeans could depart, remain as foreigners, or take Algerian citizenship, as they preferred. The GPRA entered Algiers in triumph. Europeans departed in a flood. A small-scale civil war between native factions ended with the arrival of Ahmed Ben Bella from captivity in France and his assumption of the premiership. Algerian independence had come at a frightful cost. 10,000+ French troops and officers and possibly as many as 250,000 Muslims had lost their lives in the fighting. In addition 2,000,000 peasants were made homeless. There was widespread unemployment, and economic collapse was averted only by the timely discovery and exploitation of rich oil and natural gas deposits in the Sahara. The fighting was not finished, however. Seventeen years of political infighting between Ben Bella, the FLN, and the Army was required before Colonel Chadli Bendjedid was confirmed as president in a referendum in February 1979. His administration was marked by increased Soviet influence with ever more dependence on Soviet military advisors, Soviet weapons deliveries, and Soviet style repression of political pluralism. Central planning and an industrial plant (particularly in oil and natural gas) controlled by government appointees led inevitably to serious economic problems, especially unemployment and underemployment. The 1970's also saw a small, but nasty, conflict in the vast and sparsely populated Western Sahara (a disputed border region between Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania). The "Polisario" independence movement, supported by Algeria and Mauritania, fought the Moroccan army for nearly the whole decade. By 1979 the fighting had died down and the Polisario were scattered.

In October 1988, serious riots in Algiers and other cities resulted in over five hundred dead. Bendjedid was forced to liberalize the system and break the Socialist political monopoly. Local elections in 1990 brought the Muslim fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) into the picture. Over the next two years it became obvious that this movement would be swept into power by legitimate constitutional means. In panic, the Algerian government and army intervened to cancel further elections. Mohammed Boudiaf, a former FLN dissident, was sworn in as president of a ruling Supreme State Council. Boudiaf was assassinated five months later. Dissension between fundamentalists and the government continued unabated. By 1997 the situation in Algeria was highly complex. On the one hand, the government moved ahead with its constitutional reform process, holding legislative and municipal elections. On the other hand, violence increased. Repeated massacres and assassinations occurred that security services appeared unable to control. At the same time, the economy improved, with an enlarged trade surplus and the promise of significant foreign investment in the non-oil sector for the first time since 1990. Mixed electoral results produced a coalition government that, like all coalition governments, was satisfactory, but pleased nobody. The new government claimed that it had mastered the security situation. However, brutal massacres continued throughout the year, even on the outskirts of the capital. The perpetrators appeared to reflect the full spectrum of political and religious movements with security forces, paramilitary units, and even government representatives involved.

* The term "Pied Noir" translates as "Black Feet" and refers to the fact that many French settlers in Algeria were peasants who came to farm the rich black soil of the coastal plain. Hence "Black Feet".

FOREIGN WEAPONS

AML-60 - FR; All other foreign weapons - RU

TABLES OF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT ALGERIAN ARMORED AND MECHANIZED DIVISIONS: 2002

Generation: III, Air Superiority Rating: 50, Class: Conscripts, Base Determination Factor: 25%

Mechanized Company (BMP): 3xTL3 Infantry(B)/BMP-2
Mechanized Company (BTR): 3xTL3 Infantry(B)/BTR-60
Tank Company: 3xT-72
Engineer Company: 3xTL3 Engineer Infantry/Truck
Recon Company: 2xInfantry(Type "R")/BRDM-1/-2, 2xAML-60[R]
Anti-Aircraft Battery: 1xAnti-Aircraft Artillery/Truck (See "Current Algerian Arsenal" below.)
Mechanized Battalion(BMP): 1xTL3 Infantry(HQ)/BMP-2, 3xMechanized Company (BMP), 1x120mm Mortar(3)/Truck, 2xABS-17/Truck
Mechanized Battalion(BTR): 1xTL3 Infantry(HQ)/BTR, 3xMechanized Company (BTR), 1x120mm Mortar(3)/Truck, 2xABS-17/Truck
Engineer Battalion: 1xEngineer Infantry(HQ)/BTR-50, 3xEngineer Company
Tank Battalion: 1xTank(HQ), 3xTank Company
Recon Battalion: 1xTL3 Infantry(HQ)/BMP-2, 3xRecon Company
Artillery Battalion(SP): 2xSAU122(3), 1x152mm "2S5"(3)
Artillery Battalion: 3x122mm D30(3)/Truck or 130mm M46(3)/Truck or 122mm M38(3)/Truck
F.R.O.G. Battalion: 4xFROG-7 Launcher
Multiple Rocket Launcher Battalion: 3xBM-14(8) or BM-21(8) or BM-24(8)
Air Defense Battalion: 3xSA-6 or SA-8 or SA-13
Anti-Aircraft Battalion(SP): 3xZSU-23/4
Anti-Aircraft Battalion: 3xAnti-Aircraft Artillery Battery

Mechanized Regiment: 1xInfantry(GHQ)/BMP, 1xTank Battalion, 1xMechanized Battalion(BMP), 2xMechanized Battalion(BTR), 1xRecon Company, 1xAnti-Aircraft Battalion(SP)
Tank Regiment: 1xTL3 Infantry(B) GHQ/BMP, 3xTank Battalion, 1xMechanized Battalion(BMP)
Artillery Group: 6xArtillery Battalion, 1xArtillery Battalion(SP), 1xMultiple Rocket Launcher Battalion, 1xAnti-Aircraft Battalion
Armored Division: 3xTank Regiment, 1xMechanized Regiment, 1xArtillery Group, 1xRecon Battalion, 1xAir Defense Battalion, 1xEngineer Battalion, 1xF.R.O.G. Battalion
Mechanized Division: 1xTank Regiment, 3xMechanized Regiment, 1xArtillery Group, 1xRecon Battalion, 1xAir Defense Battalion, 1xEngineer Battalion, 1xF.R.O.G. Battalion

Notes: 1) There are two Algerian Armored divisions. One is equipped with T-72s and BMP-2s, the other with T-62s and BMP-1s.
2) Their three Mechanized Divisions have T-62s in their "Tank" regiments and T-55s in their "Mech" regiment tank battalions.
3) One Stand in each Mechanized Battalion may contain an attached SA-7 (MP).

INDEPENDENT ARMORED AND MOTORIZED RIFLE BRIGADES: 2002

Generation: III, Air Superiority Rating: 40, Class: Conscripts, Base Determination Factor: 25%

Motorized Rifle Company: 3xTL3 Infantry(C), 1xTL3 Support, 3xTruck
Infantry Support Company: 1x120mm Mortar(3), 2xABS-17, 2xTruck
Tank Company: 3xT-55
Recon Company: 2xInfantry(Type "R")/BRDM, 2xAML-60[R]
Anti-Aircraft Battery: 1xAnti-Aircraft Artillery "Stand"/Truck (See "Arsenal" below.)

Motorized Rifle Battalion: 1xTL3 Infantry(HQ)/Truck, 3xMotorized Infantry Company, 1xInfantry Support Company
Ranger Battalion: 9xTL3 Infantry(R)
Parachute Battalion: 1xTL3 Infantry(HQ), 9xTL3 Infantry(B), 3xTL3 Support
Tank Battalion: 1xT-55(HQ), 3xTank Company
Artillery Battalion: 3x122mm M38(3)/Truck or 130mm M46(3)/Truck
Anti-Aircraft Battalion: 3xAnti-Aircraft Artillery Battery

Motorized Rifle Brigade: 1xTL3 Infantry(B) GHQ/Truck, 4xMotorized Rifle Battalion, 1xTank Battalion, 1xArtillery Battalion, 1xAnti-Aircraft Battalion, 1xRecon Company
Armored Brigade: 1xTL3 Infantry(B) GHQ/Truck, 1xMotorized Rifle Battalion, 3xTank Battalion, 1xArtillery Battalion, 1xAnti-Aircraft Battalion, 1xRecon Company

Notes: 1) There are five Independent motorized rifle brigades and one independent armored brigade in the Algerian army.
2) One stand in each Motorized Rifle, Parachute, or Ranger battalion may contain an attached SA-7 team (MP).
3) The Algerian army contains one Parachute division and two Ranger battalions. Information on these formations is limited.
The accuracy of the organizational data on them listed above was impossible to verify independently.

TACTICAL NOTES

Over the last forty years, the Algerians have taken their loosely organized guerilla army and developed it into a well-trained and equipped force. They possess a cadre of experienced leaders as well and are the strongest military establishment in their region. They are fully capable of modern combined arms tactics but suffer from an aging arsenal. If Algerians are pitted against their Libyan or Moroccan neighbors you should make use of your considerable air arm and numerous artillery. If forced to engage state-of-the-art NATO or U.S. forces, you should close the range quickly and concentrate on gaining clearly defined objectives. You should never allow yourself to become engaged in a long-range duel with U.S. M1's or French LeClerc's.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In the last decade Algeria has been rocked by a brutal Islamic insurgency in which more than 100,000 people have died. The political world was stunned on May 31st, 2002 when Algeria's former ruling party won an absolute majority in parliament with 51% of all seats in an election boycotted by key opposition forces, marred by rebel violence, ethnic Berber unrest, and the slaughter of twenty-five citizens by Islamic rebels only a few hours before the polls opened. In the words of a European diplomat, "Few Algerians believe the system, seen as irremediably corrupt, can be changed from within or through elections always suspected of being fraudulent". Many Algerians believe parliament is a rubber-stamp body with no real power or legitimacy. They believe the real rulers in the country belong to an opaque establishment dismissively referred to as "le pouvoir" (the power). Opposition forces say radical changes, starting with a new political culture, are needed to cure Algeria of political repression, cronyism and an economy ruined by state mismanagement. The Islamic fundamentalist movement has been fragmented recently, however. The nation appears exhausted and generally fed-up with endless killing and unrest. The latest election results bear this out. Low voter turnout and a victory for the more moderate parties may herald a period of political calm and comparative peace. However, the current level of worldwide tension, with Muslims fighting in Palestine, Afghanistan, and possibly Pakistan as well could further destabilize Algerian politics. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that the informal civil war of the last ten years could expand into a more general conflict in the future fueled by the political aspirations of Muslim fundamentalist militants. There is also the problem of the Algerians long standing claim to much of the Western Sahara. The recent Polisario resurgence there could lead to renewed fighting in the next few years between the Algerians and their Moroccan neighbors.

2002 ALGERIAN ARSENAL

Vehicles: 285xT-72, 300xT-62, 275xT-55, 50xAMX-13, 54xAMIL-60, 115xBRDM-2, 684xBMP-1, 230xBMP-2, 445xBTR-50/60
AT Weapons: ?xAT-3 "Sagger" , "AT-4 "Spigot", "Milan" (Since 1994)
Artillery: (500+)x122mm and 152mm Towed Howitzers, 5xSu-85, 145x122mm 2S1, 40x152mm 2S3, 20xISU-152
Anti-Aircraft: 180xSA-7, 50xSA-3, (40+)xSA-6, 24xSA-8, 46xSA-9, 32xSA-13, 70x57mm S-60, 100x37mm M1939, 210xZSU-23/4, 60xZU-23, 100xZPU-2 or ZPU-4 AAMG's
Combat Aircraft: 82xMiG-21, 12xMiG-25, 18xMiG-23BE, 33xSu-24M, 38xMiG-23, 3xMiG-25R, 2xMi-6, 4xMi-4, 36xMi-24, 6xAlouette-III, 47xMi-8
Small arms: Standard Soviet AK-47, SKS, and AKM rifles predominate, along with 9mm Baretta, MAT-49, and Uzi SMG's. There are even 30+ Model 1918 .30 cal. Browning "BAR" Automatic rifles in active service.

POINTS OF CONTACT

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