

The Lease Has Run Out And U.S. Isn't Wanted

By Harold H. Martin

LISBON (UPI)—The lease has run out on the U.S. Air Force and Navy base at Lajes in the Portuguese Azores and many Portuguese hope it will not be renewed.

In the national assembly this week Alvaro Monjardino, representing the Azores, said: "It is not in the interest of the region or the country to maintain this state of affairs."

He echoed the words of Foreign Minister Rui Patricio who said last September that Portugal had gained nothing from the base except a second hand ship and some \$430 million in credits which were never used.

At the time the U.S. didn't seem to care, having said it was considering pulling out the Air Force and leaving the base to the Navy.

The Middle East war changed all that.

To offset Israeli losses and counter Russian relief supplies to the Arabs, the U.S. began ferrying war material and planes to the Middle East. Lajes served as a refueling station.

"In October the real value of the base was proved," said a foreign ministry spokesman.

"It was a conflict we had nothing to do with but because of the use of the Azores base to help Israel we are suffering an oil embargo from the Arabs," said the newspaper *Diario de Noticias* in a recent

article urging the government to take a firm stand.

The oil embargo was partly in response to that use, but more at the urging of black African nations allied against a Portuguese presence in Africa who got it applied to Rhodesia and South Africa as well. It has not affected Portuguese-Arab business dealings however.

Since September the Portuguese attitude has not publicly changed.

"Our minister said in September we are not interested in renewing the base agreement and there has been no further statements. But negotiations are going on," the foreign ministry spokesman said.

But the 3,296 military and civilian Americans on the Terceira Island base are not packing yet.

Under the five-year agreement dated Feb. 3, 1969 and finally agreed to by an exchange of letters between then Secretary of State William Rogers and Foreign Minister Rui Patricio Dec. 9, 1971 there is a six-month period of grace for talks.

Either side can renounce the treaty during that time.

The base originally was granted to the British in 1943 for anti-submarine patrols. They soon were joined by American forces. After the war the United States negotiated a special agreement whereby it became "guests" of the Portuguese air force which still shares the base with the Americans.