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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STAFF SUMMARY SUPPLEMENT

August 15, 1958

399. De Gaulle's Position on Overseas Territories - Our Embassy in Paris

believes de Gaulle's proposals for the French overseas territories have gotten off to a bad start and will now be difficult to modify. The Embassy notes de Gaulle has stressed that a negative vote in the referendum on the constitution in overseas territories will constitute a vote for "secession." The Embassy points out that by excluding for those who vote affirmatively any possible development toward eventual independence, he is offering only a choice between continued association with France on his own terms or immediate independence with severance of all ties and cessation of all economic aid. The Embassy adds that in contrast with North Africa, developments in Black Africa have been viewed with relative detachment by the Metropolitan French. However, widespread agitation for "secession" in Africa, possibly accompanied by bloodshed, could change public opinion radically and lead ultimately to French "abandonment" of more areas under the worst possible circumstances. The Embassy warns we might then have to contend not only with greatly increased demands for aid from the seceded territories, but with possible renewed exacerbation of US-French relations.

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