
The Strategy of The French's Enemy in confronting the revolution in the Aurès-Nememcha region under the leadership of General Parlange The rural mobile police forces in the southern Constantine region and the Makhzen units as a model

SERRADJ Atef^{1*}

¹ Badji Mokhtar – Annaba University

[*atef.serradj@univ-annaba.dz](mailto:atef.serradj@univ-annaba.dz)

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Abstract:

France, since the outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence on November 1, 1954, has worked to eradicate the revolution, using all means, equipment, and its military and political personnel. Among the most important of these latter figures is General Parlange. He began his mission immediately upon his arrival in Algeria in 1955, quickly implementing a military strategy to crush the Algerian revolution based on plans devised by senior officers in the French army. This strategy varied from one region to another, but it took on a distinctive form in the Aurès region, as this area represented the stronghold of the independence movement. Thus, all available resources were used to achieve this goal. In this context, we will touch upon some key moments in this policy by introducing one of the main tools relied upon by Parlange: the mobile rural police forces and the Makhzen forces.

Keywords

Algeria; France, Algerian war; Parlange; G.M.P.R.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the outbreak of the Algerian Revolution on November 1st, 1954, the French forces quickly implemented a military strategy aimed at quelling the Algerian Revolution based on plans devised by senior military officials in the French army and varied from region to region. However, it took on a distinctive form in the Aurès region. , and among those who attempted to suppress the revolution in this area was General Parlange, who assumed military and civil command of the Aurès-Nememcha region on May 7th, 1955. He sought by all means to counter revolutionary activities, given that this region represented a stronghold of the liberation revolution. To achieve this goal, he employed all available resources. This article discusses one of the most important means employed by General Parlange: the rural mobile police forces. Accordingly, we pose the following question: What were the rural mobile police forces? How were they structured? What tasks were assigned to them?

To answer this question, we adopted the historical-analytical method, which suits the nature of the subject primarily based on French archival documents .

Parlange's plan included the approach and means to ensure the success of his policy in confronting the revolution.

II. GASTON PARLANGE

Gaston Marie Georges Barlang, 1897-1972, was born in Bayonne, Gironde. He participated in World War II as a lieutenant and then worked in Morocco between 1919 and 1924 in the Moroccan Sharpshooters Regiment where he held the rank of second lieutenant. He became a captain from 1924 to 1942. He worked in the Office of Indigenous Affairs in Morocco, participated in World War II where he commanded a column composed of Moroccans, became a colonel in 1946, and continued his work in Morocco as an inspector of public relations in Morocco. He became a governor of the Agadir region in 1955 with the rank of brigadier

general. He was the proponent of the idea of relying on additional forces from the local population by forming groups of Goumiers and mobile police units in rural areas in Morocco. He was appointed by Governor General Jacques Soustelle as head of the civil and military command of the Aurès and Nemamcha regions on April 28, 1955, where he became a general in 1956 (boubakeur, 2021).

III. Additional Police Forces Supporting the French Army in 1955:

A French report on the new proposals for the French military leadership highlighted the need for additional police forces in the southern Constantine region to cope with the evolving military situation resulting from the outbreak of the Algerian Revolution. The French leadership indicated that a new distribution map for the additional support forces of the French army would be implemented through the rural mobile police.

As of April 1st, 1955, 36 goumi were added to the Constantine province's group of a thousand (goumi). An additional seven goumia were integrated into a total of 140 goumia to be placed under the disposal of administrators affiliated with the Aurès. Notably, the last seven were not provided with weapons and clothing, as the available supplies were only sufficient for the 140. In accordance with French leadership instructions, beginning April 1st, 1955, temporary goumia were transferred to the mobile unit of the rural police G.M.P.R (ANOM, service des liaisons Nord-Africaines, 1955).

The Development of the General Situation in Southern Constantine Regarding the Rural Police

The presence of many new elements from this category prompted the French military leadership to propose new measures regarding their needs for these additional forces. This was due to the military activity of the revolution in Aurès specifically and southern Constantine in general. Other areas also witnessed significant activity by the Liberation Army. Additionally, it became increasingly difficult to monitor and maintain the resources in many mixed municipalities with vast areas. This necessitated the establishment of monitoring points for this type of force because the intervention elements formed from temporary El Goum still had weak intervention effectiveness.

The eastern borders, along the Atlas Mountains, saw significant losses for the French forces, as did the borders of the Aurès region and the Hodna Mountains, which are connected to the Kabylie mountain range.

Most mixed municipalities were affected by the revolutionary activities of the Liberation Army soldiers, who exploited the difficult terrain and lack of monitoring means. This increased activity of the Liberation Army led to the Algerian people, especially rural residents, rallying around the revolution. These significant developments necessitated providing military support in all mixed municipalities in southern Constantine by establishing rapid intervention elements. These intervention elements should currently be composed of groups from the Mobile Rural Police (le groupe mobile de police rural), which should replace the temporary El goumia units.

IV.

IV - CONCLUSION

Bien que l'on puisse déceler certains signes encourageants, la situation reste critique et grave.

Espérer une influence sur le rebelle chevronné et compromis est illusoire, il faut le détruire. L'insubordination des bandes de l'Aurès au système général mérite de retenir toutefois notre attention.

C'est sur les populations que doivent porter tous nos efforts, populations qui ont été ébranlées par les deux coups récents : la déclaration de l'Assemblée à l'O.N.U. et la motion des délégués du 2^e Collège.

Il faut que la population sache :

- que nous ne traiterons pas,
- que nous ne partirons pas,
- que nous sommes prêts, par contre, à adapter nos méthodes en conformité avec leur degré d'évolution.

Le Général P A R L A N G E
Chef du Commandement Civil &
Militaire des Aurès-Nementchas,

Paul Lange

structure of the mobile rural police units :

The French leadership had approved under decision number 334, dated April 2nd, 1955, the formation of thirteen mobile units of rural police (G.M.P.R), in addition to seven additional detachments. They also considered adding five reserve units for rural police. These mobile units of rural police consisted of:

- Thirteen officers.
- Seventy-five non-commissioned officers.
- One thousand four hundred fifty personnel in total across the units.

On March 4th, 1955, the French leadership proposed the permanent establishment of these thirteen units of rural police and seven detachments to address developments in the southern Constantine region. This initiative aimed to prevent shortcomings, provide additional support to the French army, and was approved to align with the initial distribution plan of the rural police units. This plan included necessary precautions for areas experiencing increased activities by the Liberation Army, thereby reinforcing them with units ready for rapid intervention against any potential Liberation Army activities.

The plan included the formation of 32 storage units in the mixed municipalities, comprising 32 non-commissioned officers and 828 personnel in these units. It also involved the formation of thirteen storage units in the Aurès, headed by 26 non-commissioned officers and 26 squad leaders, and comprising 468 personnel. Additionally, five mobile rural police teams were to be formed, headed by five officers and 22 non-commissioned officers, with a total of 315 personnel. The total number of personnel in these combined forces was 1,452, equipped with fifteen (F.M) weapons, eighty-eight (P.M) weapons, and 1,667 (Mousquetons) weapons. These teams and units were distributed across collo, Souk Ahras, Mersat, Tebessa, Arris, Sedrata, M'sila, El Biban, Hanga Sidi Naji, Takout, El Maadher, Fej Mezala, El Milia, Menna, Oued Taga, Bouhmama, Chelia, Ras El ouaach, Gantis, Naqourban, and Fom El Toub.

These groups were often distributed across wide areas, with units relatively far from each other. The French military command attempted to study the potential difficulties that the leaders of the mobile rural police teams might face at the administrative level. It was essential to form and distribute these units as a necessary measure to confront the military operations of the Liberation Army, which created an atmosphere of insecurity, particularly in areas with a European majority, and similarly for the Algerian population. This situation generated a state of frustration and despair among these populations in many areas.

The instructions sent by the French military command on April 2nd, 1955, emphasized the need to station the mobile rural police teams in the designated locations, ensuring that the distance between each team was no more than 20 kilometers. The instructions also stressed the necessity of strictly adhering to the leadership's directives, which was the primary condition for establishing strong and robust rural police teams.

Additionally, it was crucial to establish other intervention units in municipalities where existing units would be relocated, as withdrawing units without replacing them would also create a state of insecurity in these municipalities (ANOM, Secteur de Khenchela, Secteur de Biskra, 1955).

V. Distribution of Mobile Rural Police Teams:

After a thorough study, Colonel Verlet proposed the necessity of doubling the contact points between administrative centers and the local population. Emphasis was placed on establishing numerous contact points, known as Civil Affairs Offices. Each leader of a Goum team is an officer from the Civil Affairs, and he has the freedom to manage and operate the unit he leads.

- Each administrator should have a group of storage teams proposed for the work.
- Every Civil Affairs officer of Moroccan origin should be accompanied by Moroccan Goum members, if possible, or members of the Mobile Rural Police group.

The positioning of these units in the Aurès is as follows:

- Four units of the Mobile Rural Police teams will be stationed permanently.
- Three units will be temporarily stationed.

●The number of Civil Affairs officers' centers in the Aurès should be twelve, so five units of the Mobile Rural Police teams (G.M.P.R) have been divided (ANOM, L'implantations et les effectifs des G.M.P.R, 1956).

VI. Three available options:

Formation of five temporary units of the Rural Police to coincide with military operations against the revolution, with a maximum duration of five months.

These new units will have the same composition as the existing permanent units.

If there are financial difficulties in forming these temporary units, it is essential to find a solution to enable the French forces to enhance their capabilities in the Aurès through these units.

Two financial solutions can be considered if it is impossible to grant financial credits to form the temporary (G.M.P.R) units:

Deploy these temporary units for five months in the Constantine district, with their expenses covered by Constantine and the Aurès.

These groups will be established within five months.

VII. Positioning of the Mobile Rural Police units:

In a report dated August 19, 1955, numbered 2099, a correspondence from Albert Saincierge, Administrative Inspector of the Mobile Rural Police units in the Constantine sector, outlines the positioning of these units in the region.

Center (Compes): Led by Lieutenant Lirola, this center includes an officer representing the head of the center, along with two non-commissioned officers, and consists of 63 individuals. Their intervention area covers: Combes, Lacalle, MedjezSfa, and LaCalleLamy.

Center LaVerdeure: Under the command of Lieutenant Verdeguer, with Deputy Rabah, the center includes an officer, six non-commissioned officers, and 68 members of the (G.M.P.R). Their mission is to intervene in Sakiyet Sidi Youssef, LaVerdeure, and Souk Ahras.

Center in Tebessa: Led by First Lieutenant Guillaumie, with Deputy Chiche. This center includes an officer and seven non-commissioned officers, comprising 83 members distributed in Tebessa, Sedrata, and Meskiana.

Second center in Tebessa: Led by Captain Loubeyre, with assistance from Maichia. This center includes an officer and seven non-commissioned officers, comprising 75 members distributed in Tebessa and Negrine.

Third center in Tebessa: Led by First Lieutenant Domyon. This center includes an officer and four non-commissioned officers, comprising 67 members stationed in Tebessa.

Center in LaMahouna: Led by Captain Coudert and Lieutenant Jaccaz, with assistance from Raybaud. This center includes two officers, six non-commissioned officers, and 79 members in LaMahouna and Galliene.

Center in Sidi Zedzaz: Led by First Lieutenant Moulard. This center includes an officer and seven non-commissioned officers, comprising 70 members in Sidi Zedzaz and Oued El Anab.

Center in Tebardga: Led by First Lieutenant Venys. This center includes an officer and four non-commissioned officers, comprising 61 members distributed in Hancha Sidi Naji, Tebardga, Ouled Rechache, and Khenchela.

Center in Tamalous: Covering the areas of Tamalous, El Kala, and Skikda.

Center in Arris: Led by Captain Lefebvre-Ganne, with assistance from Fouques. This center includes an officer and six non-commissioned officers, comprising 83 members distributed in Arris, Takout, and the city of Arris.

Center in Chateaudun: Led by First Lieutenant Marie, with assistance from Bertrand. This center includes an officer and six non-commissioned officers, comprising 83 members distributed in Chateaudun and Ain M'lila.

Center in Djémora (MacMahoun): Led by First Lieutenant Serva. This center includes an officer and four non-commissioned officers, comprising 61 members stationed in Djémora.

Center in Mchounech: Led by Captain Joucla, with assistance from Lieutenant Marzouk. This center includes two officers, seven non-commissioned officers, and 90 members distributed in Mchounech, Oulach, Tagmout, Biskra, and Arris.

Center in Fej Mezzala: Led by First Lieutenant Bouhala. This center includes an officer and eight non-commissioned officers, comprising 50 members stationed in Fej Mezzala.

Center in Corneille: Led by Captain Vantelot. This center includes an officer and four non-commissioned officers, comprising 76 members distributed in Barika, Corneille, El Maadher, and Blizma.

Center in Périgotiville: Led by First Lieutenant Penhoat, with assistance from Allouch. This center includes an officer and seven non-commissioned officers, comprising 72 members distributed in Périgotiville, Medjana, and Biban.

Center in La Fayette: Led by First Lieutenant Beatch, with assistance from Lieutenant Dubourg. This center includes two officers, seven non-commissioned officers, and 67 members distributed in La Fayette and Oued El Marsa.

Center in Paul Doumer: Led by First Lieutenant Boche, with assistance from Bondietti. This center includes an officer and six non-commissioned officers, comprising 54 members distributed in M'Sila, Colbert, and Paul Doumer.

Center in Aqbou: Led by Lieutenant Hébrard, with assistance from Rousseing. This center includes two officers, eight non-commissioned officers, and 36 members of the G.M.P.R. distributed in Aqbou, Sidi Aïssa, Ihazzaz, and Amqran.

Center in El Ma El Abiodh: Led by First Lieutenant Aguzou. This center includes an officer and 53 members from Algiers.

Center in Ferkan: Led by First Lieutenant Taulier, with assistance from Goret. This center includes an officer, two non-commissioned officers, and 78 members from Blida.

Center in Chréa: Led by Captain Agulo. This center includes an officer and a non-commissioned officer, comprising 78 members from Oran.

Center in Bouhamad: Led by First Lieutenant Starozinski, with assistance from Bekada. This center includes an officer, two non-commissioned officers, and 76 members from Souhala.

Center in El Milia: Led by Lieutenant François, with assistance from Peyret. This center includes an officer, eight non-commissioned officers, and 75 members stationed in El Milia.

The mobile rural police teams were supervised by a military officer who served as the head of the unit (ANOM, L'implantations et les effectifs des G.M.P.R., 1956).

VIII. Formation of "Makhzen" Units in Mixed Municipalities:

All mixed municipalities in Constantine province were contacted to form an additional police force called "Makhzen". This workforce consists of between twenty to forty Makhzen personnel depending on the municipality's needs and the sensitivity of the area, as well as the distance of rural police units from other security units.

The Makhzen groups are highly significant within or outside the operational area, with a proposed monthly amount of 1500 francs per individual, excluding social fees. Each Makhzen member incurs leadership costs for armament, clothing, and supplies amounting to thirty thousand francs (30,000 francs.)

The formation of Makhzen teams requires a total of 27 million francs, with an estimated monthly initial equipment fee of thirteen million five hundred thousand francs, excluding social fees.

The formation of Makhzen units will provide municipal leaders with ready intervention elements whenever necessary, and the presence of rural police mobile units must be outside the operational area.

Restructuring of the Aurès Region: The evolving situation in Algeria and the five-month military operation against the revolution have led to the creation of two crucial elements that compelled the French military command to adjust its operations and means of work.

According to the French report, the administration was prepared to confront these developments. It

placed fifteen Moroccan officers specialized in civil affairs under the command of Colonel Verlet, tasked with both political and military actions to eliminate the activities of the National Liberation Army (ALN), gradually weaken the revolution's activities, and restore stability and security to southeastern Constantine.

Since 1955, the French administration has established two administrative centers in the Aurès, which are annexed. Through these centers and the civil affairs officers, the French administration aimed to devise a new approach to control the Aurès region, known for its unique social patterns. However, the effectiveness of these centers or civil affairs officers could not succeed without support from reinforcement and assistance forces, referring to the "Makhzen".

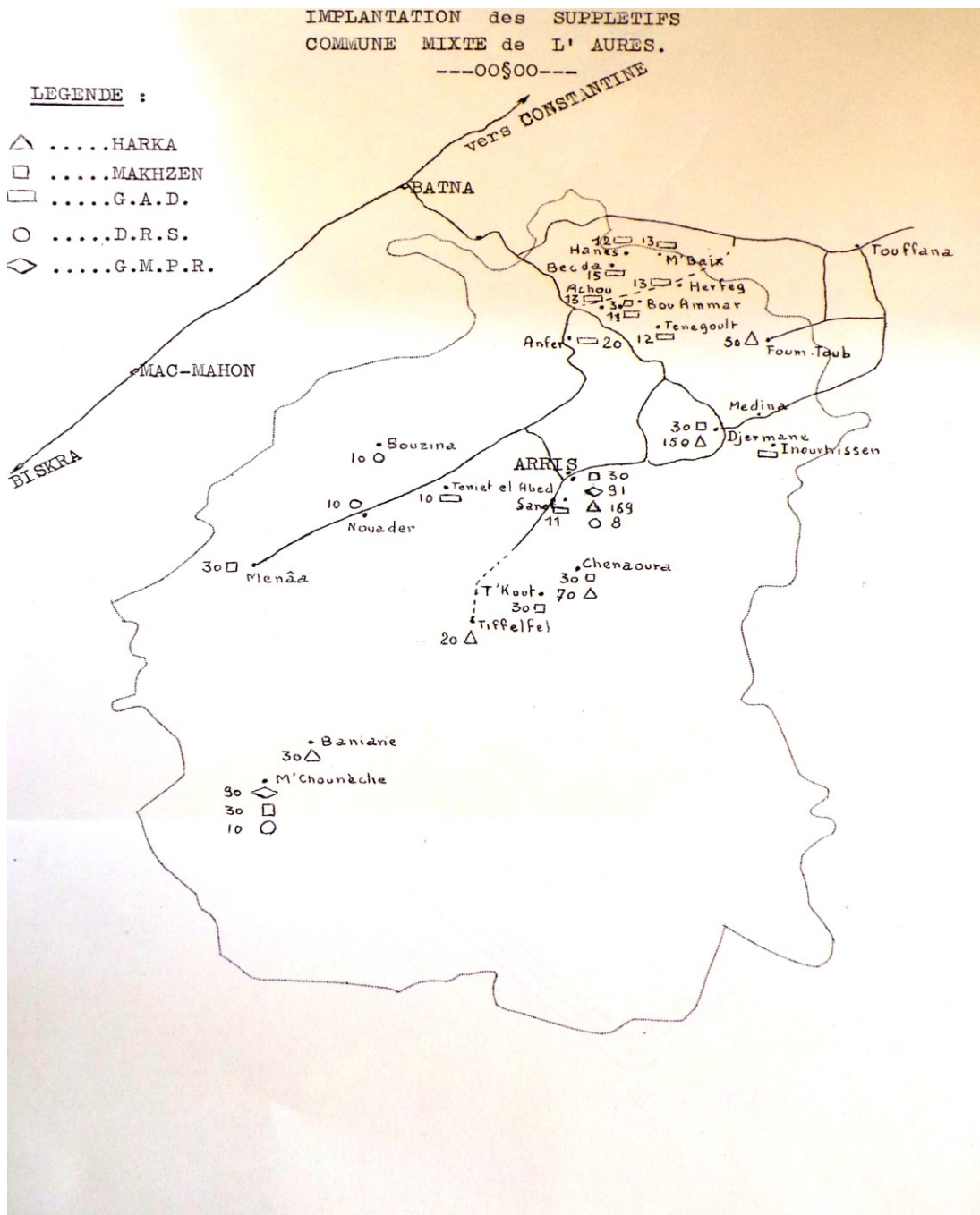
It was emphasized in the French report that the operational plan stated: "If we want to secure ourselves (meaning the French administration and its forces), we must create a state of insecurity and instability for the National Liberation Army day and night in this rugged terrain, making it easier to locate and pursue ALN soldiers". (boubakeur, 2021)

Colonel Verlet proposed having three shifts or twelve Moroccan platoons under the command of civil affairs officers. Their headquarters would be located in a specific area. It is essential that the administrative centers established by the administration in the Aurès region have permanent intervention forces under their command, as these centers will be permanent.

Formation of Makhzen Units in the Aurès: The French administration proposed recruiting forty Makhzen members in each administrative center located in the Aurès, supervised by European officers, local officers, and two leaders of the units. According to the French report, the Makhzen members were already present in considerable numbers at these centers, serving as temporary platoons.

Additionally, the French administration proposed establishing Mobile Rural Police Groups (G.M.P.R) in the operational areas of the Makhzen units in the Aurès. The total number that the French administration aimed to achieve in the Aurès was the formation of thirteen structured Makhzen units, composed of:

- European officer ranks.
- Local officer ranks.
- Unit leaders.
- Makhzen members (ANOM, rapport du general parlange chef du commandement civil et militaire des Aures-nememchas, 1956).



Appendix: Positioning of rural police forces and warehouse forces in the Aurès region (boubakeur, 2021)

IX. French Forces in the Aurès Region between 1955-1956

The report indicates the number of military forces at General Parlange's disposal from July 1, 1955, to July 25, 1956, highlighting the fluctuations in the number of French forces in the Aurès region during General Parlange's command. The graph showing the evolution of the French forces' numbers between July 1955 and July 1956 in Aurès Nemencha indicates the following:

The number of French forces increased between July 1955 and January 1956 due to:

The arrival of the 3rd Infantry Battalion (3Bem Infantry), the Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion (demi brigade de légion étrangère), and the 421st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment (421° RAA)

The 3rd Battalion of Algerian Nomads (groupe de compagnies Nomades Algérie), also referred to in documents as the Mahrists who rode camels to monitor the borders, or the soldiers of the nomadic groups.

The 10th Cavalry Division (10e division de cavalerie)

The number of French forces decreased between January 1956 and April 1956 due to:

A reduction in the number of soldiers due to losses suffered by the French forces due to the strength of the liberation movement in Aurès Nemencha.

Human losses suffered by the 3rd Tabors and the 4th Moroccan Battalion (4Bons Marocains) since the outbreak of the revolution on November 1, 1954, both in active units and contracted units. The losses in active units led to a noticeable decrease in their numbers, and these units were not replenished with additional soldiers to compensate for the losses.

Between April 1956 and July 1956, the number of French forces increased again due to the arrival of the 94th Infantry Regiment (94e régiment d'infanterie), the 3rd Algerian Rifle Regiment (3e régiment de tirailleurs Algériens), and the 44th Infantry Regiment (44e régiment d'infanterie). Therefore, the increase in the number of forces and active units during this period allowed for the implementation of Plan No. 02.

General Parlange points out the distribution of French forces in Aurès Nemencha, which were at his disposal as follows (ANOM, Variation des effectifs du 1er juillet 1955- au 25 juillet 1956, 1956):

X. General reserve for July 1955:

Batna: Two artillery battalions and six intervention units.

Arris: Four battalions and one Tabor.

Khenchela: Six battalions, one Tabor, and three intervention units.

Tébessa: Three battalions and three intervention units.

Biskra: One battalion, one Tabor, and one intervention unit.

Distribution of French forces across different sectors of Aurès-Nemencha between 1955-1956:

General Parlange confirms that the distribution of forces in the operational sector was controlled by the anti-revolutionary activity. The number of battalions in Batna increased from two to five in January 1956, with six intervention units. Arris had four battalions and one Tabor, Khenchela had seven battalions and one Tabor, Tébessa had three battalions, and Biskra had two battalions, with an increase in the number of intervention units in all regions.

In April 1956, the positioning of French forces fluctuated, with Batna classified as a dangerous area (Zone Pourrie), with five and a half battalions and ten artillery units, three battalions in Arris, four and a half battalions in Khenchela, three in Tébessa, and two in Biskra. The number of battalions increased again, varying from one region to another, with five battalions in Batna, four in Arris, six in Khenchela, three in Tébessa, and three in Biskra.

For the Arris area, the axis of the revolution and the base of the Liberation Army, the number of French forces was intensified between July 1955 and July 1956.

XI. Development of the French Forces' Numbers:

Upon assuming command, General Parlange found the number of French forces and equipment insufficient, so he sent several requests for reinforcements and equipment. The situation in Aurès Nemencha, due to the strength of the revolution and the increasing activity of the Liberation Army, necessitated additional forces to succeed in facing the revolution in Aurès and countering the significant threat posed by the Liberation Army to the French forces in the region.

During the period between April and July 1956, under the implementation of plans U2 and VALMY, the number of French forces in Aurès reached 29,638 soldiers and officers, up from 23,000. It is noteworthy that the effectiveness of the new active units was not at the same level as the active units lost in battle. The professional, experienced forces needed to adapt to the new conditions in terms of confrontation style and terrain.

General Parlange notes that the available resources were insufficient and that his requests for reinforcements for the French forces in Aures were not fully met, especially as the situation in Aurès-Nememcha became increasingly worrying, necessitating additional reinforcements to address it effectively (ANOM, *Reserve générale juillet 1955*, 1955).

XII. Conclusion:

French colonialism employed various means and methods to suppress the liberation revolution. To achieve this goal, they appointed their finest generals, including General Parlange, who was sent to Algeria. Upon his arrival in the Aurès, he restructured the French army and created new units, among which were the Mobile Rural Police Groups and the Makhzen units. These units were deployed in southern Aurès, where the Algerian revolution was at its most intense.

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