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# Leak in U.S. on Base Talks Irks Spain

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MADRID, Feb. 28—The Spanish Government, which had hoped for closer ties with the United States under the Nixon Administration, has been alarmed and outraged by accounts in the American press depicting differences in Washington over the negotiations to renew military base rights here.

The accounts speak of displeasure in the State Department at United States military negotiator, Gen. David Burchinall, who reportedly was endorsing too strongly Spanish estimates of the bases' importance.

Ambassador Alfonso Merry Del Val has protested to Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson over what the Spaniards regard as a deliberate leak, aimed at sabotaging the talks. The story first appeared in a column by Flora Lewis in Newsday on Long Island.

No public statement has been issued here so far, but a Spanish official said privately that all Mr. Johnson had to offer was "excuses."

## Revaluation a Main Goal

The Spanish Foreign Ministry has set as one of its main goals—the other is the recovery of Gibraltar—recognition by the United States that the Air Force bases at Madrid, Seville and Zaragoza and the Polaris submarine base at Rota—have increased vastly in value since the agreements were first signed in 1953.

The Spaniards were dismayed when the Johnson Administration failed to show much interest in this argument and when the preliminary deadline for expiration of the agreements passed in September without a new one in sight.

There was hope that the approach of the final deadline—March 26—at the end of a six-month grace period would incase United States interest, particularly under a new Administration.

The Foreign Ministry has become increasingly worried as no move was made from Washington for diplomatic discussions of the renewal. All that has been going on, over the last two months, has been a joint review by Spanish and United States military groups—the latter under the supervision of General Burchinall—of Spain's defense needs.

The State Department has shown no sign of taking seriously the Foreign Ministry's warnings that discussions could not go on after the March deadline. This relaxed attitude rests on the belief that the Spanish military has no desire to see the talks broken off, and that their judgment will prevail with Generalissimo Franco.

Washington's unhurried attitude arises from two other factors as well. One is the widespread view in the State Department—not shared by some in the United States military branch—that the bases are useful but not essential.

The second is political. There

have always been doubts whether extending, let alone increasing, military assistance to the Franco regime was advisable in the absence of urgent strategic reasons. A gradual pattern of liberalization over the last decade here has so far overcome these doubts.

The Government's recent imposition of the state of exception—assumption of emergency police powers—however, and the uncertainties about continued liberalization, have revived these doubts. Some Washington officials believe that it may be just as well if circumstances put off the signing of a new agreement until the state of exception—currently scheduled to last until April 24—is lifted.

## Deplore Attention to Price

Nervousness over Washington's attitude made the foreign ministry fully ready to suspect the worst. Spanish diplomats are urgently trying to discover whether the source of the leak was someone linked to the old Administration—which would not be so bad—or a member of the new Nixon team.

Spanish officials have always protested against accounts of the negotiations that stress the amount of military assistance as the main issue. The original Spanish request was estimated to be over a billion dollars over five years. This was reduced to the equivalent of \$700-million. The American offer was approximately \$140 million.