



Algiers

Located in North Africa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Algiers has been populated since at least the 3rd century BCE. Algiers came under the control of the Ottoman Empire in 1529. Algiers paid a yearly tax to the Ottoman rulers, but was otherwise independent. The “Dey” (governor) of Algiers could make his own decisions in all matters related to other countries.

Algiers relied heavily on corsairing to fund the state. Corsairing provided money through selling captured ships and their cargo. The crew of a captured ship could be ransomed for money or forced to work for the city. The government of Algiers received a percentage of this money from all corsairs. Corsairing also provided money through treaties. In these agreements, a country paid Algiers money (called a tribute). In exchange, Algiers corsairs stopped capturing that country’s ships.

In 1793, the Dey of Algiers, Pasha Hassan, signed an agreement with Portugal that allowed Algerian corsairs to pass through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean. This provided Algerian corsairs more opportunities to find new ships to capture. Within only a few months the corsairs captured 11 ships from the United States with whom Algiers had no treaty. To Algiers, the United States was not nearly as intimidating as Britain or France, as the United States had no navy to threaten war. Algiers also doubted the United States could pay enough tribute. Nevertheless, Algiers knew it had a good opportunity for gaining money and goods from this situation. Algiers wanted to strengthen its navy and sought naval supplies such as wood planks, oars, bales of canvas, nails, cables, pipe staves, rope, bombshells, and gunpowder. The United States could provide these as part of a possible treaty agreement.

Opening Position:

- Will sign a treaty agreement to end corsairs capturing U.S. ships and return hostages for money or naval supplies plus yearly tribute.
- The Dey has already made a formal request asking for \$2.2 million.

Questions to Consider:

- What does Algiers hope to gain in a possible treaty with the United States?
- What is the possible risk of war with the United States or its allies?

What can Algiers negotiate with?

Remember that you don’t have to offer these right away in a negotiation.

- Promise to return hostages.
- Agree to not capture any U.S. ships in the future.

- Work on agreements with other Barbary States to persuade them to sign similar treaties.
- Offer most favored nation trading status with the United States.