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LETTER DATED 22 DECEMBER 1977 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF FRANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

After examining letter S/12500, addressed to you on 21 December 1977 by the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, I must vigorously protest against the allegations contained in that document. The statements made therein are totally inconsistent with the facts.

I should like to draw your attention to the recent statements made by my Government. France cannot fail to take an interest in the fate of its nationals who are contributing to the development of Mauritania, a respected Member of the United Nations and a country with which we maintain close relations of co-operation. In the face of the persistent threats directed against our compatriots in undisputed Mauritanian territory - which is the only area in which these French nationals are present - it is the duty of the French Government, as it would be the duty of any Government with respect to its nationals abroad, to provide protection for them.

In view of this situation, our air force units - in very limited numbers - may take action to help maintain the security of our nationals in Mauritania when the latter are endangered, doing so only at the request of the Mauritanian Government. Moreover, it seems scarcely necessary to state that no French military aircraft outside our national territory is armed with the weapons referred to in the aforementioned letter.

The present conflict in the region is not France's affair. My country was not a party to the Madrid agreements, and I wish to point out that it voted in favour of General Assembly resolutions 3458 A (XXX) and 3548 B (XXX), which reaffirm the inalienable right of the peoples of Western Sahara to self-determination. We stand by this position. My Government's only concern is the security of our compatriots, civilian technicians, employed for the most part by Mauritanian companies, who have nothing to do with the conflict resulting from the return of the former Spanish Sahara.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Jacques LEPRETTE
