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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

Approved For Release 2008/08/01 : CIA-RDP79R00890A001100010033-8

Approved For Release 2008/08/01 : CIA-RDP79R00890A001100010033-8

NSC BRIEFING 14 January 1959

25X1

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ

II. Our present position of Iraqi situation can be summarized as follows:

A. While we have no evidence that Qassim is a Communist, it is clear that he is increasingly coming under Communist influence, and is likely soon to reach a point where he is incapable of action independent of the Communists.

B. Unless action is taken to curb Communism, or unless the Communists make a major tactical error, Iraq will ~~probably be transformed into a~~ Communist controlled Iraq.

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D. The only effective and organized force in Iraq capable of countering Communism is the Army. [redacted]

E. There is a distinct possibility that a period of chaos might develop in the event of an unsuccessful coup attempt or a breakdown of administration. Should this happen, the ultimate advantage will lie with the Communists who demonstrated immediately after the Revolution a striking organizational and improvisational skill. 25X1

III. Kasir meanwhile is carrying on his internal anti-Communist drive.

A. The round-up of Communists in the UAR is said to have garnered most of the top-level types, with the notable exception of the Syrian Communist party leader, Khalid Bakdash, who is reported to have fled to Beirut and thence possibly to Baghdad.

B. Kasir claims to be confident that the Soviet Union will not retaliate against him, but he evidently is nervous and inclined to see political motives behind any new difficulty raised by Moscow regarding trade and aid.

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C. Part of Nasir's confidence on this issue derives from fact that Soviets did sign an agreement on 27 December to advance $100,000,000 credit for Aswan High Dam and to take charge of construction of the first phase of the project.

1. West Germans, principal free world people interested in participating in the dam work, have been excluded from the first phase, although they still hope to enter on other phases of construction. (At the moment, of course, relations between Bonn and Cairo are very cool because of Nasir's talks with Grotewohl and the announcement that the UAR would enter "consular relations" with the GDR.)

2. The only actual work on the dam so far has been done by the Egyptians themselves with advice of Western engineering firms--building access roads, testing rock and soil formations, preliminary surveying, partial excavation of diversion tunnels.

3. At present a team of Soviet technicians is re-studying the plans and the preliminary work as well as the modus operandi for the first phase (3-4 years, mainly earth moving).

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