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# CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



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The Iraqi Communists also remain aggressive. Colonel Mahdawi, the notorious pro-Communist who heads the military court conducting the Baghdad "treason" trials, is reported scheduled for appointment as minister of interior. The incumbent is a relatively neutral figure who is believed opposed to the leftist tendencies of the regime. Mahdawi was reported to have sought the post at the time of the cabinet shift in early February; his appointment would be the strongest indication thus far that Qasim is under Communist control.

A Communist newspaper in Baghdad last week called for a purge of government officials in Mosul Province, a stronghold of pro-UAR sentiment where the Communists have come off second best in recent rioting. The paper called on the government to protect "honest nationalists" in Mosul from "misguided" persons influenced by foreign intelligence agents, and urged that the suspicious Syrian contacts maintained by "feudalist" elements in the Mosul area be investigated. The Communist "peace partisans" reportedly plan a large-scale demonstration in Mosul on 6 March; if the pro-UAR elements organize a counterdemonstration, the resulting clashes could be used by the government to justify the "cleanup" of the area which the Communists have demanded.

The Popular Resistance Force (PRF), which still appears to be under Communist control despite Qasim's decree of last January subordinating

it to the army, is expanding its operations. New recruits are being called for, and new training for the PRF is to begin in Baghdad on 13 March and in Mosul and Basra on 7 March. The PRF presumably is intended as the Communists' paramilitary arm in case of serious civil strife; it was used by the Communists on past occasions as a kind of anti-imperialist vigilante group usurping police functions. It is not known to have yet received any general issue of arms.

Reports that the commanders of the First and Second Army Divisions have been placed under house arrest would appear to indicate that the chances of army backing for a coup have been seriously diminished, because these two officers were the most prominent opponents of Qasim's policies. Qasim had sought to transfer them to the diplomatic corps, but the officers had resisted such assignment.

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the dissidents; this stand disturbed Khalil and the Ansar leader, Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi.

The two dissident commanders, disregarding the orders of the Supreme Council, returned to Khartoum on the morning of 4 March. Their troops surrounded army headquarters and the Ministry of Defense and occupied strategic positions in Omdurman and Khartoum North. Another meeting of the Supreme Council was held that afternoon, following which Abboud announced that all the council members had resigned. They are reported to have given Abboud a vote of confidence to form a new council, whereupon Abboud moved the general meeting of all army commanders up to 5 March.

Several motivations appear to be behind the dissidents' action. Most important, they resented the appointment to the Supreme Council of officers who were junior to them and had different religious and political affiliations. They apparently felt that it was the influence of Wahab supported by these officers which resulted in ineffective and overly pro-Western government policies. Brigadier General Abdullah is reported to advocate pro-Egyptian policies.

It is not clear at this time, however, to what extent the other regional commanders will support the attitudes of Abdullah and Shannan. Premier

Abboud will also be subject to strong pressures from the leaders of the two main religious sects, as well as from political leaders, some of whom are receiving subsidies from the UAR ambassador. Any new military government which Abboud may succeed in forming will probably still contain elements of dissension, exploitable both by the UAR and by internal religious and political factions.

Iraq

Iraqi Prime Minister Qasim this week replied publicly for the first time to the UAR propaganda attacks against his regime. Without mentioning Nasir of the UAR by name, Qasim in effect charged that Nasir has failed to give full support to the Algerian rebels; has refused generally to cooperate in the development of common Arab foreign, military, and economic policies; and has bribed "mercenary newspapers" to attack the Qasim regime. Echoing recent Communist propaganda lines, Qasim also contrasted the "dictatorship" by an "individual" in the UAR with the rule of "the people" in Baghdad. He promised that new "revolutionary" developments would occur in Iraq within a month.

The reason for Qasim's choice of this particular time to join issue with Nasir openly is not clear, unless he feels that the recent gradual slackening of the UAR propaganda campaign indicates he has Nasir on the run.

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