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33

21 March 1963

Briefing for
House Armed Services Committee

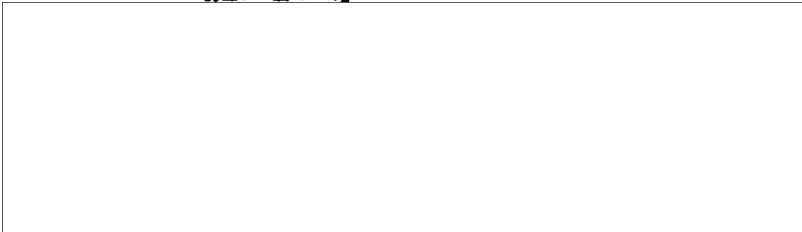
CONTENTS



NR Record

3. MIDDLE EAST

New Iraqi Government
New Syrian Government
Iraqi-Syrian Relationships with Nasir, Faysal,
and Husayn



NR Record

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

21 March 1963

IRAQ

- I. The coup on 8 February which ousted the psychotic Qasim brought in a young and untried regime which is faced with the task of bringing order out of the economic and political chaos left by four and a half years of Qasim.
- A. Iraq's new rulers are a combination of Iraqi nationalists and pan-Arab socialistic Baathists. The Baathists dominate the government but depend on the army, which has many anti-Baathist officers who resent the Baath's leadership. Dissension is likely to break out soon.
- B. One of the toughest problems faced by the new regime is its relations with Iraq's 800,000 Kurds, about 15-20 per cent of the population. They successfully rebelled against Qasim and held off the Iraqi army over 20 months. The present regime is attempting to reach an understanding with them whereby the Kurds will be allowed some sort of local autonomy. So far negotiations have not progressed very well and the war could break out again.
- C. The Baathists are strongly anti-Communists and have crushed the Iraqi Communists, jailed

~~-9-
SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

hundreds of party members, and executed several of the party's central committee. Relations with Moscow, excellent under Qasim, are now bad. Relations with the US are good--five members of the cabinet are products of US universities--and the Iraqis have asked to buy US helicopters and tanks, items previously purchased from the USSR. There are indications that the regime wishes to loosen Iraq's ties with the Soviet Bloc and gradually replace Communist technicians with Western experts. However, the regime fears to give the impression of having too close ties with the West and outwardly professes a neutral foreign policy.

Another unresolved problem is Iraq's relations with the Iraq Petroleum company (23.75 per cent owned by Standard of New Jersey & Socony). Qasim seized over 99 per cent of the company's concessionary area and imposed a high loading fee on oil going out of Basra. As a consequence the company did not increase its production. Since the country depends on oil income (about \$266 million a year), and governmental

-10-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

and development costs are rising, settle-
ment of the dispute is important to the
new regime.

-11-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

21 March 1963

SYRIA

- I. Syria's Baathist-inspired coup on 8 March came exactly one month after the Iraqi one. The new Syria regime is even more heavily dominated by the Baath than that in Iraq, but is much more shaky. Pro-Nasirism is stronger in Syria and the country is deeply divided into a number of factions. The army, which is the key to the situation, has a considerable pro-Nasir element. Its leadership at the present time, however, is pan-Arab in its inclinations, but desires to retain Syria's national identity.
- II. Syria traditionally has been a pawn between Egypt and Iraq. The present Syrian regime will retain control or be overthrown on the issue of its relations with Nasir's Egypt. Syria has been very unstable since 1949 and has undergone eight military coups since then. The army has continually interfered in the civilian government.

-12-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

21 March 1963

THE IRAQI-SYRIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH NASIR

- I. The establishment of Baathist-dominated regimes in Iraq and Syria has produced a competition for leadership of the Arab Nationalist Movement. While standing for much the same things in the economic and social fields, Baathist leaders and Nasir are split over the form of Arab unity. The Baathists do not want Iraq and Syria swallowed up in a Nasir-run super Arab state. Nasir's popularity among the Arab masses, and much of the intelligentsia and army officers, however, has put the Baathists on the spot. Syria has become the battleground for this clash of ideas.
- II. Realizing its vulnerability to Nasirism, the Baath leadership in Iraq and Syria has attempted to ward off a Nasir takeover in Syria by proposing federation of the three countries. Each would retain control over its internal affairs but would cooperate with Egypt in matters of defense and foreign policy.
- III. Negotiations are being carried on at the present time in Cairo over this question. A combined

-13-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Syrian-Iraqi delegation left Cairo last Sunday after fruitless negotiations. The Syrians returned suddenly on Tuesday and are being joined by the Iraqis on Thursday. Apparently Nasir is being tough in his demands for a Cairo-controlled union. The Baathists are resisting this to the best of their ability, but are fearful of being charged with blocking Arab unity. Opposition to Nasir's demands could spark a pro-Nasir coup in Syria; agreement to them might bring about the ouster of the Syrian regime by anti-Nasir army elements. Meanwhile, Nasir's propaganda embarrasses the Baath by hammering on the theme of Arab unity, while his agents stir up pro-Nasir demonstrations in Syria.

-14-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

21 March 1963

IRAQI-SYRIAN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAYSAL AND HUSAYN

- I. Jordan and Saudi Arabia have become isolated in the Arab world as the result of the Iraqi and Syrian coups. Both the Baath and Nasir have openly declared their opposition to monarchist regimes and they are targets for Baathist and Nasir-instigated subversive operations.
- II. Saudi Arabia now appears to be the most promising target. The Saudi involvement in the Yemeni affair has been unpopular with the majority of Saudi Arabians and for several years there has been disaffection in the Saudi armed forces. Nasir paradropped arms into Western Arabia in mid-February, apparently to equip anti-regime elements. Most of these were recovered by the Saudi regime.
- III. A revolt in the Hijaz--the area along the Red Sea coast--is possible and Nasir might send troops to support it in much the same manner that he backed the Yemeni revolutionaries.
- IV. Jordan's position is somewhat different. While King Husayn's regime is unpopular with much of the population, his army is believed to be generally reliable. Also, Baathist and Nasirist elements are reported not

-15-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

to feel strong enough at the present time to carry out a successful coup. Assassination of the King is always a possibility.

- V. A factor which might put a damper on Nasir, or any other potential revolutionary, is the threat of Israel's reaction. The Israelis at times have threatened to seize that part of the country lying west of the Jordan River should Husayn be overthrown-- almost certainly if they felt it was a pro-Nasir coup.

-16-

~~SECRET~~