

Approved For Release 2004/07/16 : CIA-RDP79T00429A001200030010-3

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
9 September 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Situation in Yemen

1. The overall picture in Yemen is that of a continuing stalemate. While there has been no abrupt rupture of the disengagement plan, its progress has been painfully slow. The UN observation mission has been plagued with serious administrative problems which have rendered it largely ineffective. However, the willingness with which both Egypt and Saudi Arabia agreed to finance the UN operation for an additional two months indicates that both sides feel the mission continues to be of some use.

2. There has been no significant change in the military situation in northern Yemen for several weeks. Egyptian and Yemeni republican forces remain unable to cope effectively with the guerrilla tactics of the royalist tribes in the northern hinterland but retain firm control of the major population centers and the coastal lowlands. The pattern of shifting centers of hostile action and of shifting tribal loyalties in response to changes in the tactical situation and to new offers of money to individual tribes remains a constant. The Egyptian forces continue to bear almost the entire brunt of the actual fighting on the republican side and are keeping up indiscriminate daily bombing and strafing attacks on royalist areas. As long as these Egyptian troops remain in the field the royalist forces cannot win a major victory. They do, however, appear to have sufficient arms, ammunition, and money within Yemen to continue hit-and-run attacks at least for the immediate future.

3. Thus far there has been no major reduction in the number of Egyptian troops in Yemen. Movement

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of troops between Egypt and Yemen has been more in the nature of a rotation than a withdrawal.

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Egyptian troop strength in Yemen at 29,000;

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The UN observer team has consistently erred on the number of Egyptian withdrawals, primarily because of failure to observe the arrival of troop replacements. The UN estimate is that 6-7,000 men have been withdrawn.

4. While we continue to believe that the Egyptians desire to withdraw the bulk of their forces fairly soon, they will do so only if this does not endanger the republican government. Egyptian troops were originally sent to Yemen to provide support for the republican government in its struggle with the royalist forces, who were then receiving considerable Saudi aid and encouragement, and the continued survival of the regime remains a cardinal Egyptian aim. If the Saudis continue to withhold ammunition and money from the royalists, royalist resistance might in time diminish sufficiently to permit most of the Egyptian forces to withdraw. A new Yemeni republican army is being trained, and the Egyptians apparently expect that this force will eventually deal with the minor tribal dissidence that is endemic in Yemen. The Egyptians will almost certainly maintain a sizeable number of their own forces in Yemen, however, as long as they perceive a major military threat to the republican regime.

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8. Egypt has indicated that it is interested in such talks, but its primary concern in this regard is to broaden the base of the present republican government. It is worried over continued bickering, corruption, and inefficiency within the regime

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Sallal has alienated some elements of the southern Shafi tribes--the main support of the republican

regime--by appointing a number of northern Zaidi tribesmen to important posts, and his own position appears to be in some doubt. Some Shafis unhappy with the present state of affairs apparently favor a separate state free from the domination of the Zaidis, who have traditionally ruled Yemen.

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9. Egypt would not accept, however, a broadening of the Yemeni regime that would seriously compromise its republican, reformist, and "nonaligned" character. Egyptian prestige is closely tied with the preservation of the republican regime along the broad general lines it has already charted for itself. Neither would Cairo be likely to favor the breaking up of the present Yemeni state, over which it maintains great influence. Faysal, for his part, is probably resigned to some sort of republican regime in Yemen, but hopes to be able to greatly reduce Egyptian influence once the Egyptian troops leave the country. If the Egyptians can starve out the royalist forces militarily and can perhaps reduce friction in Sana they will probably withdraw the bulk of their forces from Yemen. But this may take some time and before it occurs and the Saudis, seeing the Egyptian troops remaining in Yemen and continuing to violate the disengagement agreement, may come to feel that they must renew their aid to the royalists. Should this happen Egyptian bombing deep into Saudi territory almost certainly would be resumed.

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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