

1978, ~~Bar~~ Assad, Iraq, CIA Report

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC #4890-80
10 July 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
Acting Chairman, National Intelligence Council *HT*

FROM :

SUBJECT : ACTING National Intelligence Officer for Warning
NIC Monthly Warning Meeting

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1. In an effort to take advantage of the collective expertise of the NIOs, the chairman convenes the National Intelligence Council once a month as a warning committee. These sessions are designed to complement the regular NIO monthly warning meetings with a view to strengthening the ability of the NIC collectively and the NIOs individually to conduct disciplined and systematic examinations of trends and developments which may have potential warning significance.

2. The following are the highlights of our NIC warning meeting of 10 July:

a. Syria: Assad is increasingly vulnerable to assassination or removal by coup. Should he depart the scene, a successor regime is likely to be unstable, unpredictable, and probably more radical. Removal of Syrian troops from Lebanon would markedly fuel the already crisis situation there. A more unstable Syria would also introduce added instabilities into its relationships with Israel, the Arab world, and the USSR. An Alert Memorandum on this subject is being prepared today.

b. Vietnam/Kampuchea/Thailand/China: The Thai may welcome recent incursions as an opportunity to demonstrate to the US their need for assistance. The rainy season is upon us, and we probably will not see a major offensive, but minor incidents will continue. China is unlikely in

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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

SYRIA-IRAQ: A Temporary Alliance
[REDACTED]

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The three-month-old rapprochement between Syria and Iraq is the product of mutual concern over the Israeli-Egyptian peace process and the upheaval in Iran as well as the narrow tactical considerations of each side. Although a "unity" scheme between these two traditional rivals may come soon, it will be fragile and superficial. Both governments are deeply suspicious of each other and have rival pretensions for leadership in the eastern Arab world. [REDACTED]

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Limited political, economic, and military cooperation between the two is nonetheless likely as long as their short-term objectives outweigh their permanent national ambitions. Syrian President Assad and Iraqi President Bakr may announce agreement in principle to "unite" their two countries at a summit meeting in Damascus later this month. Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization may be invited to the final session or to an immediate postsummit conclave to make more credible Syria's military threat on Israel's eastern front. [REDACTED]

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There is little chance of a real integration of the two countries. Arab groups in Syria and Iraq have been rivals since the seventh century. Their longstanding inability to agree on sharing waters of the Euphrates River, for example, reflects their geopolitical difficulties. [REDACTED]

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Religious sectarianism also works against unity; a Sunni Muslim minority rules in Baghdad and an Alawite minority regime governs in Damascus. Many Syrians oppose a real rapprochement because they fear Iraqi political subversion. [REDACTED]

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Since Syria achieved independence in 1946, its foremost foreign policy concern has been to preserve national independence against threats from its neighbors. Syria ---continued

[redacted]

has supported the idea of Arab unity but largely as a matter of its Baath Party's pan-Arab ideology. Iraq and Egypt have tried to exploit this tendency in order to dominate the Syrians. Syria joined the United Arab Republic with Egypt in 1958, signed a never-implemented federation agreement with Egypt and Iraq in 1963, and joined the Confederation of Arab Republics initiated by Egypt and Libya in 1971. None stood the test of time.

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The Camp David accords and developments in Iran are the most important, but not the only, current sources of affinity between Syria and Iraq. The Syrians are also attracted by Iraq's oil wealth and view Iraq's armed forces as a possible reserve that could enhance Syria's military credibility and its ability to obtain concessions from Israel in future negotiations. Iraq sees ties with Syria as the first step toward playing a stronger role in Arab affairs and toward minimizing Soviet and domestic Communist influence in the region. Iraq also is concerned about unrest spilling over from Iran.

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The various joint committees created in the past two months to pave the way for unity apparently have made little progress in the key areas of party, military, intelligence, and security matters. Both sides want Israel to feel increased military pressure, and thus are likely to hammer out some arrangement for closer military coordination. The possibilities include:

- The formation, at least on paper, of a joint military command.
- A token Iraqi military presence in Syria, possibly on the Golan Heights.
- Contingency planning for deployment of an Iraqi force to Syria.

The economic results of the rapprochement to date have been mixed. Transportation services have been resumed, restrictions on border crossing lifted, and new commercial and trade contracts signed. Disagreement over distributing waters controlled by Syria through the Tabaqah Dam on the Euphrates River, however, may

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continue to block the reopening of the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline that runs through Syria to the Mediterranean. [REDACTED]

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Despite their congruent views toward Camp David, the two countries have made little apparent progress in the area of political cooperation. The two international wings of the Baath Party could be reunited in a scheme to stress Arab solidarity at the coming summit meeting, but the depth of the personal antagonisms and ideological differences between the two sides would make such a move only cosmetic. The national leaders of Iraq and Syria will, in any event, retain ultimate control of all political activity in their respective countries. [REDACTED]

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