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Authority NND 969049

By CM NARA Date 6-2-03

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XR - PS 77 US-YEMEN

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1973-11-7 Aryan, South, Arrests
 Department of State
 AmEmbassies Jidda, London, Sa'ana,
 Stockholm, Amconsul Asmara

E.O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : CASC, PINT, FAID, YS

FROM : AmEmbassy ADDIS ABABA DATE: November 7, 1973

SUBJECT : Visit to People's Democratic Republic of
 Yemen by Swedish Diplomat
 REF : State 156043

Summary

Mr. Carl-Erhard Lindahl, First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy in Addis Ababa, visited the American Embassy on October 24 to relate impressions he had received during his nine day trip to Southern Yemen in mid-October. Lindahl described the stringent security regulations in PDRY which can apparently be unknowingly violated by even the most discreet traveler. He related information he had received concerning the arrest and detention in Southern Yemen of Westerners for alleged security violations, including two Americans. During his visit, the Swedish envoy met with Chairman Salim Rubay'i Ali, who acknowledged the detention of only one of the Americans. In another area, the Chairman expressed interest in continuing unification talks with the YARG. With regard to foreign assistance, Lindahl found that the Soviets were providing the bulk of PDRY's military aid. Although economic assistance is being donated by a number of Socialist states, he observed that the Southern Yemeni economy is declining.

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The primary purpose of Mr. Lindahl's trip was to provide assistance to a Swedish dentist who was being detained in Aden for alleged "subversive" activities. Prior to his trip, the Swedish envoy phoned the Embassy's Consular Officer to inquire into the reasons why we were currently warning Americans not to travel to PDRY. The Consular Officer explained briefly the arrest and detention of two apparently innocent American tourists as outlined in the telegram under reference.

The Consular Officer added that, while the British represent our interests in PDRY, we would be interested in any information Lindahl might acquire in pursuance of his own duties concerning the American detainees and the general situation in PDRY.

Mr. Lindahl's comments have been divided first into those concerning the arrest and detention of Americans and Europeans in PDRY, and second, those relating to his impressions of the political and economic situation in Southern Yemen.

Arrest and Detention of Americans and Europeans in PDRY.

Mr. Lindahl said that British Embassy officials in Aden confirmed that they believed two Americans were currently being detained there. They added that one of the prisoners was being tried for taking unauthorized photographs and that a British Embassy representative had been allowed to attend the first trial session.

The Swedish envoy said he had the impression that the American's trial would probably last for quite some time, followed, hopefully, by a light sentence of perhaps a month or two. He said that the court procedure was evidently being delayed by the requirement that the court clear all save their most minor decisions with higher authority.

In the course of his visit, Lindahl said he had had a meeting with Chairman Salim Rubay'i Ali. During the meeting, he reported, the Chairman remarked that there were "Two--no, one" Americans currently being held in PDRY. Lindahl had the impression that

the Chairman

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the Chairman knew two were being held, but did not wish to acknowledge the second detainee. The Chairman reportedly added that his government was "open" about the American being tried and had "even allowed a British Embassy representative to attend the first session".

The Swedish diplomat stated that the Swedish dentist he had gone to assist was released the day after his arrival. He indicated that the dentist had been residing 600 miles up the coast from Aden. The man had apparently been associating with "reactionary elements", most likely the sheiks in his area who had not wholeheartedly accepted the current regime. Lindahl attributed his expeditious release partly to the minor nature of his offense, but also to the influence, albeit limited, which Sweden has in PDRY.

When queried about the detention of other Westerners in PDRY, Lindahl replied that one Frenchman was being detained and another had taken refuge at the French Embassy in Aden to escape arrest for alleged "security" violations. Lindahl said that the Western detainees appeared to be receiving reasonably good treatment in prison, and mentioned that the Swedish dentist had been detained in an apartment under guard.

The Swedish envoy confirmed that the arrests of Westerners are generally related to alleged "security" violations. He had the impression that arrests may occur from taking unauthorized photographs, passing from one "zone" in PDRY to another without a permit or perhaps for merely looking in the direction of an area that is considered to be restricted. Lindahl added that he himself had unknowingly crossed zones and been detained for over an hour at a police station until authorization for his release was obtained from the Minister of Interior. He attributed the stringent security measures to the instructions of East German advisors, who are in charge of training the PDRY security forces. Lindahl noted that security measures are considerably tighter than when he had visited the PDRY in 1971.

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Lindahl found the Southern Yemeni economy to have declined since his most recent previous visit to PDRY in 1971. He attributed the decline partially to the continued inoperation of the Suez Canal, but also to dwindling Western investment. The largest source of tax revenue is the BP refinery, which Lindahl said was barely functional, and was not being expanded or modernized.

Whereas a recent census listed the population of Southern Yemen at 1,600,000 and of Aden at 270,000, Lindahl indicated that other statistics on the country are closely guarded.

Lindahl saw considerable evidence that PDRY appears to be concentrating its indoctrination on the country's youth, with instruction being provided by Palestinians, Syrians, and Iraqis, among others. Their emphasis was especially evident in an October 14 National Day parade witnessed by the envoy which featured ranks of rifle-carrying teenaged Southern Yemenis.

The Swedish diplomat remarked that there had not appeared to be any particularly adverse reaction toward Westerners in Aden as a result of the Arab-Israeli war.

Lindahl said that no one can visit the foreign embassies without a special permit and that the embassies are so isolated that they do not really know what is going on in the country.

Comment

In light of the continuing arrest and detention of Westerners on patently flimsy charges in PDRY, and the difficulty in obtaining consular access to detainees, the Department may wish to issue a revised, more definitive warning against travel to PDRY than that in M-311 (9-73). To say that travel to Southern Yemen is discouraged and that discretion should be exercised in avoiding restricted areas does not seem to adequately warn American travelers of the present precarious situation for visitors to PDRY.

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