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Authority **NND 969049**  
By **CM NARA** Date **6-12-03**

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TO : Department of State

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**1971-52-75 Iyari, Nu'man, Cabinet**

FROM : USINT SANAA

DATE: May 10, 1971

SUBJECT: The New Yemen Government - A Profile

REF :

INTRODUCTION

The announcement of the Nu'man cabinet on May 3, 1971, marked an important point in Yemen's political evolution. Whatever the future stability or longevity of this new YARG, the Republic successfully weathered a difficult period in which a new constitution and untried electoral mechanisms were put to a critical test. This peaceful governmental transition suggests that the Yemeni political system is beginning to conform to the once-meaningless structural outlines that were drawn for it shortly after the 1962 revolution. The 1971 exercise in electoral and constitutional processes differs from earlier ones in that it was guided by the Yemenis themselves under reasonably normal internal conditions resulting from the termination of the civil war approximately one year ago.

Part I of this Airgram lists the members of the new Republican Council and Cabinet, and contains brief biographical notes for the more important individuals. The latter comments will help to provide a profile of the new YARG, but are not intended as substitutes for complete biographical reports that will be submitted separately as time permits.

Each Council and Cabinet member is identified according to religious affiliation. It should be noted that differences between Zaydis (Shi'ites) and Shafa'is (Sunnis) are not significant in a strictly religious sense, since neither sect is fanatic; rather, the division tends to be based on political and economic rivalries stemming from geographic and ethnic differences. The Shafa'is are mostly from the south and coastal areas, whereas the Zaydis are from the northern highlands. The former, at least in the past, have been more sedentary; concerned more with agriculture and trade than tribal feuding, they have constituted Yemen's principal

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Clearance: *[Signature]*  
5/7/71  
GROUP 3

Downgraded at 12 year

interlevel - not automatically declassified

Contents and Classification Approved By: *[Signature]*  
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ethnic link with the outside world. The Zaydis by contrast have been more tribally-oriented, inward-looking, and warlike. The new Republican Council consists of 1 Shafa'i and 2 Zaydis, while the cabinet ratio is 6 to 11. This obvious Zaydi dominance, quite in line with traditional Yemeni politics, is somewhat offset by the fact that the prime minister and one member of the three-man Council are Shafa'is. It is likely that Nu'man will appoint officials to several as-yet unfilled posts at the deputy prime-minister level; such appointments of course could alter the above ratios.

Part II of this report contains a comprehensive list of deputies in the new Majlis al Shuura (Consultative Assembly). As the YARG has not published a roster of deputies showing region or religion, this list contains names only. This poses no special problem, since the Majlis--as its name implies--is a purely "consultative" and not a true decision-making body. The new Majlis has a markedly "tribal" profile, and thus it may be assumed that Zaydi dominance is more pronounced here than in the Republican Council and Cabinet. Indeed, the significant feature of the Majlis is that it appears to be composed primarily of hinterland shaikhs. While this should tend to perpetuate the Majlis as a debating society rather than allow its development as a parliamentary body, it is too soon to expect Yemen's top-level leaders to relinquish any significant decision-making powers to this wider circle of parliamentarians.

The list of Majlis deputies is noteworthy for the absence of prominent names. In fact, the only deputy worthy of mention is Ali Sayf al Khawlani, who served as Minister of Economics in the mid-1960's. Although once a flamboyant politician, Khawlani seems to have faded from public view in recent times.

Notwithstanding the blank image offered by rank-and-file deputies, the Majlis chairman--shaikh Abdallah ibn Husayn al Ahmar--remains a key figure in Yemeni politics. As premier Hashid shaikh and paramount shaikh of the Hashid-Bakil confederation, he is the de facto spokesman for the tribes; on the other hand, his leader-image may become slightly weaker now that YARG subsidies have diminished. Al Ahmar's hinterland constituents are physically and mentally removed from the urban channels of republican rule, and thus are not a participatory political force in the positive sense; however, having the ability to control much of the countryside, they have the negative power of being able to cooperate with or oppose the country-wide extension of the central government's power. In one sense, the faceless Majlis amounts to a communications network: information and largesse flow outward from the Republican authorities through the tribal sub-society, and indications of support or dissent flow back through the shaikhs. Whether the Majlis existed or not, the system would work about the same. For example, in the last days of al Ayni's regime, the prime minister's efforts to replace tribal subsidies with YARG-funded "functional

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Authority: 25 CFR 172.16