



Authority (MND) 969 045

By (MC) MARA Date 7/20/01

Department of State

TELEGRAM

1969-12-22, Nasser, Sadat, Vice

CONFIDENTIAL 503

PAGE 01 CAIRO 02958 221326Z

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ACTION: NEA-15

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07 L-09 NSAE-00
NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-20 USIA-12 NIC-01 AF-12

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1. JUST BEFORE LEAVING FOR RABAT CONFERENCE, NASSER ISSUED DECREE APPOINTING ANWAR SADAT AS VICE PRESIDENT. THIS FIRST TIME SINCE JUNE WAR AND SUBSEQUENT GOVERNMENT SHAKE-UP THAT UAR SUCCESSION HAS BEEN LAID OUT. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 110 UAR PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION OF 1964, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT ASSUMES PRESIDENCY FOR 60 DAYS IN EVENT OF EMERGENCY AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THEN ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT. THIS MEANS THAT IN EVENT SOMETHING HAPPENS TO NASSER, SADAT WOULD TAKE OVER AT LEAST TEMPORARILY.

2. NOT POSSIBLE TO TELL YET WHETHER SADAT APPOINTMENT MEANT TO BE TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT. MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS MADE SUGGESTS LAST MINUTE DECISION TO ENSURE THAT SOMEONE RELIABLE ON HAND TO MIND STORE WHILE BOSS IS AWAY. ON OTHER HAND, NASSER LEFT COUNTRY IN 1968 FOR THREE WEEKS IN SOVIET UNION WITHOUT BOTHERING TO APPOINT VICE PRESIDENT. IT MAY BE THAT OCCASION OF NASSER'S DEPARTURE FOR RABAT SUMMIT WAS SEIZED UPON TO FORMALIZE SADAT'S CURRENT POSITION. SADAT HAS BEEN IN EFFECT PERFORMING NUMBER TWO ROLE FOR LAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

3. IN MEANTIME, ALI SABRI IS BACK IN CIRCULATION. HE WAS ON FRONT ROW WITH NASSER AT BAIRAM PRAYERS IN AL AZHAR MOSQUE AND ALSO ATTENDED NASSER-FAISAL TALKS. HOWEVER, ALI SABRI HAS BEEN SICK AND HIS RETURN TO PUBLIC LIFE MAY BE COEFFICIENT OF HIS HEALTH RATHER THAN HIS POLITICAL STANDING.
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