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TO : Department of State

INFO: AMCONGEN ASMARA for USINT SANAA, AMEMBASSY JIDDA

1970-6-17, Iryani, Ayni Meeting

FROM : Amembassy Beirut

SUBJECT : Yemeni Officials Stress Need for Scholarships and Other Contacts with West

REF

Newsweek's Middle East correspondent, Milan Kubic, has provided the Press Attaché with some information obtained from his recent visit to Sanaa that was not carried in the May 25 Newsweek article on Yemen. Kubic says that in conversations with him, Prime Minister Muhsin al 'Ayni and former Foreign Minister Ahmad Barakat made a point of emphasizing the Yemeni desire to strengthen ties with the West -- through scholarship aid and diplomatic and other contacts -- in the face of a growing Soviet presence.

Barakat was concerned that Western-educated officials like himself (London School of Economics) were to an increasing degree being replaced by Soviet-trained Yemenis. He indicated that some 500 Yemenis are now studying in the Soviet Union and made particular reference to a group of 104 agricultural engineers who had returned from their Soviet training "very poor technicians, who know only Russian." "We are in dire need of scholarships for study in the United States and other Western countries," he stated.

Barakat also revealed that his two trips to the United States last year, which took place "under the pretext of attending a United Nations session and a World Bank

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meeting," were in fact undertaken "to try to reopen the Embassy."

As an example of their independence from Soviet control, Barakat recalled that the Yemenis had rejected a request from the Soviet Ambassador for permission to build a satellite tracking station on the Red Sea "on top of the highest mountain in the Arabian peninsula." The Russians, in turn, had refused a Yemeni request for ammunition for their Russian-made arms and suggested that the East Germans be approached. Yemen, however, had balked at East Germany's quid pro quo -- diplomatic recognition.

Al 'Ayni, a former Ambassador to Washington, the UN, and Moscow, expressed similar views about the need for continued associations with the West. He pointed out that only two Western governments -- those of Italy and West Germany -- are represented among the 14 embassies in Sanaa. "Obviously," he added, "what we are striving for is a semblance of balance."

The Prime Minister said also that when the US interests section was established in Sanaa, he was anxious to avoid conveying the impression that the Americans were "sneaking" into town. He had therefore welcomed them in a radio broadcast, explaining to his listeners that the Yemeni arrangements with respect to the interests section were similar to those which obtained at Cairo.

PORTER

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