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Authority (NND) 969 045

Sy MC NARA Date 7/26/01

15-16

D State

TELEGRAM

1968-7-25, Nasser, Saudi, Saqqaf

Jidda

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RSR 01, /124 W 7-25-68

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51
ACTION NEA 15

R 251355Z JUL 68
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4043
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 4898

DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO

SUBJ: NASSER'S SPEECH

1. COMMENTING ON NASSER'S JULY 23 SPEECH, WHICH HE HAD BOTH HEARD AND READ, SAQQAF TODAY EXPRESSED VIEW THAT FOR NASSER IT WAS MODERATE IN TONE. AS HE READ IT, IT EVEN OBLIQUELY SUGGESTED A WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH USG. I NOTED THAT NASSER'S COMMENT THAT 6TH FLEET IS PART OF ISRAELI DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT IS STRONGLY REMINISCENT OF "BIG LIE" AND HARDLY CONSONANT WITH ANY SUCH AIM. I ALSO SAID WOULD HAVE THOUGHT SAUDIS MIGHT BE DISTURBED AT SNIDE SUGGESTIONS THAT ANY ARAB FRIENDLY TO US IS AN "AGENT". SAQQAF ARGUED FORMER STATEMENT NECESSARY FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION AND DISMISSED LATTER AS UNIMPORTANT.
2. HE ALSO DESCRIBED SPEECH AS LARGELY DEFENSIVE IN NATURE. NOTING THAT NASSER IS CURRENTLY SENSITIVE TO SAUDI, MOROCCAN, TUNISIAN AND SOME OTHER ARAB CRITICISM ABOUT HEAVY SOVIET INFLUENCE IN UAR, SAQQAF THOUGHT NASSER'S REFERENCES TO SOVIETS INTENDED REASSURE UAR PUBLIC AND OTHER ARABS THAT EVEN THOUGH SOVIETS ARE HELPING, UAR REMAINS INDEPENDENT AGENT.

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3. SAQQAF ARGUED THAT NASSER WANTS SETTLEMENT AND THAT LATEST SPEECH AGAIN SHOWS THIS. HE DEPLORED ISRAELI PUBLIC DENUNCIATION OF SPEECH AND SAW IT AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF ISRAELI UNWILLINGNESS REACH HONORABLE SETTLEMENT. I SUGGESTED IT WOULD BE BETTER IF BOTH SIDES ESCHEWED PUBLIC BRICKBATS AT THIS DIFFICULT TIME. SAQQAF AGREED IN PRINCIPLE, BUT THOUGHT NASSER'S INTERNAL POSITION HAS WEAKENED TO A POINT WHERE HE HAD TO MAKE SOME SORT OF PUBLIC STATEMENT. HE THOUGHT SPEECH HAD AGAIN RAISED NASSER'S STOCK IN ARAB WORLD, EVEN IN SAUDI ARABIA.

4. SAQQAF ALSO EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN NASSER'S STATEMENT ABOUT GOING TO SOVIET UNION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. HE SAW THIS AS AN INDICATION THAT NASSER IS ALSO PHYSICALLY WEAKENED. HE SAID SAG COUNCIL OF MINISTERS YESTERDAY SPECULATED WHO IS LIKELY TO ACT FOR NASSER DURING HIS ABSENCE. SAQQAF THINKS IT WILL BE HUSSEIN SHAFIE.

5. SAQQAF REITERATED HIS CONCERN AT ARAB-ISRAEL IMPASSE. UNLESS SOME SETTLEMENT IS SOON REACHED, HE THOUGHT ARABS WILL AGAIN GO FOR MILITARY SOLUTION. SOONER OR LATER HOSTILITIES WILL ONCE MORE BREAK OUT. WHAT DEEPLY DISTURBS HIM THAT THIS TIME SAUDI ARABIA IS NOT LIKELY TO BE ABLE TO KEEP OUT.

GP-3. EILTS

NOTE: NOT PASSED CAIRO BY OC/T.

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