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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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12 March 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DCI

SUBJECT: Nasser and the Conservative Arab Monarchs

1. Nasser has seized the opportunities provided him to launch a violent propaganda offensive against both the Iraq-Jordan Federation and King Saud. We do not believe that, in this, he is acting on a definite plan for the immediate overthrow of King Hussein or King Saud, although that is certainly his ultimate intention. Rather, we believe that he is acting opportunistically to advance his long-range objectives -- the elimination of foreign influence and the establishment of his own hegemony over a united Arab area -- expecting that eventually internal developments in Jordan and Saudi Arabia will accomplish his purposes. The existing level of Arab excitement is such, however, that the situation may develop more rapidly than Nasser intends.

2. Nasser's attack on Saud: The exposure of Saud's plot with Sarraj and the propaganda barrage aimed at Saud from Cairo and Damascus

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will probably not, of themselves, bring about Saud's downfall, but his prestige and authority in the royal family and among his advisers and chief henchmen have probably been damaged. Saud's position in his own house has already been weakened by his inability to achieve progress on the matters of Buraimi and the Gulf of Aqaba, and by the deteriorating economic situation in Saudi Arabia.

3. A continued Egyptian-Syrian propaganda campaign designed to challenge Saud's claims to area influence and leadership and to label him as a collaborator with the "imperialists" is likely to be highly effective among radical Arab nationalists even in Saudi Arabia. Nasser could use his substantial personal influence to turn many important Saudis against their King. Nasser may at present be testing his strength against Saud only to determine whether to seek to displace him now or later. We believe it unlikely, however, that the situation has yet developed to the point at which Nasser can organize an effective palace coup against Saud. He will probably work further to undermine Saud's position and prestige until a group favorable to Nasser and capable of wresting power from Saud does emerge.

4. For his part, Saud is highly unlikely to try to fight Nasser in the open. He is much more likely to try to appease Nasser and pay his respects to the idea of Arab brotherhood and unity. Such a course, however, is unlikely to gain him relief from United Arab Republic (UAR) pressures. If present trends continue and Nasser is not side-tracked by internal difficulties in the UAR, we believe that Saud's position may become critical within the next year.

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5. The attack on the Arab Federation: After some initial display of enthusiasm, the leaders of the Arab Federation have allowed it to lose momentum. The delay of Iraq and Jordan in recognizing the UAR and some slighting remarks about the UAR by Iraqi-Jordanian officials gave Nasser the occasion for his propaganda attacks on the federation. In a propaganda contest on any level, the Federation is almost certain to be bested by the UAR due to the widespread appeal of Nasser's brand of nationalism.

6. Nasser has as yet made no direct move against Jordan, the Federation's weaker element. However, he has been encouraging the establishment in Gaza of a government purporting to represent all Palestinian Arabs. This would have a profoundly disturbing effect on Jordan's West Bank and would probably provoke disorders which King Hussein's government would have difficulty in putting down.

7. We believe that Nasser could eliminate Hussein and bring about the formation of a government in Jordan which would join the UAR. He is probably inhibited, from doing so, however, by the possibility of intervention by Israel, Iraq, or even the US. Nasser probably believes there is a better than even chance that Israel would attack him if he ousted Hussein and established his own government in Jordan. He might be willing to accept this risk, feeling that Israel would appear to be the aggressor and that he could count on UN and Soviet support similar to that in the case of the Sinai invasion in 1956. On balance, however, we believe that the danger of Israeli attack will cause Nasser to exercise restraint.

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Moreover, the formation of the Iraq-Jordan federation has increased the likelihood of Iraqi intervention.

8. Longer-range developments: The strength of the radical UAR is almost certain to wax and that of the conservative Arab federation to wane, unless important additions to the Iraq-Jordan Federation's strength and spirit are made. Nasser will move toward the absorption of both Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the UAR as the developing situation permits. He will probably continue to seek to influence developments in Jordan and Saudi Arabia by propaganda and diplomatic means so as to bring about what appears to be a voluntary rejection of their conservative leaders and voluntary adherence to the Syro-Egyptian union. Nasser's accomplishment of this purpose will be facilitated by widespread popular support throughout the Arab kindgoms for his leadership and objectives. He will probably be reluctant to accept the risks involved in initiating the use of armed force.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES



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