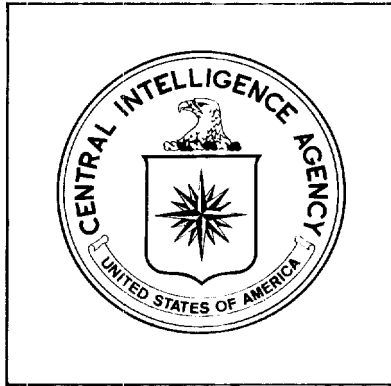


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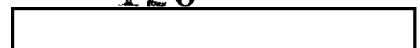
STAFF NOTES:

Middle East Africa South Asia

State Department review completed

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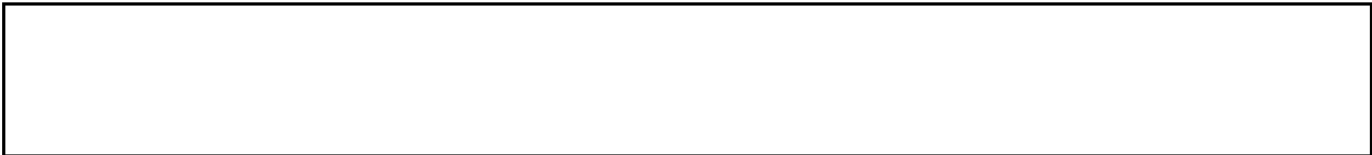
MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA



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Kuwait

Election Results

A preliminary assessment of the results of the Kuwait National Assembly elections on January 27 indicates that pro-government deputies will continue to dominate the 50-seat legislature, but that opposition to the Sabahs--Kuwait's ruling family--will be greater than ever before.

Showing unexpected strength in the voting were young, liberal candidates pledged to domestic social changes. Most of the 16 newly elected deputies fall into this category.

The Kuwaiti left suffered a serious reversal, retaining only four of the eight seats it held; the left's traditional spokesmen, however, were re-elected. The government worked hard and spent freely to defeat the leftists, but many old-line Sabah conservative deputies also went down to defeat.

Reflecting the election results, the new assembly is likely to devote a good deal of time to the legalization of political parties and social issues such as women's rights, coeducation, and the role of immigrants in Kuwait.

Although the new assembly will to some extent represent an erosion of Sabah power, the US embassy believes the ruling family's discomfort will be tempered by the fact that the opposition is not inclined toward radical views.

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Somalia*Seeking Better Relations With the US*

Somalia, anxious to improve ties with the US, has removed what Mogadiscio believes has been the major obstacle to better bilateral relations.

Somalia's ambassador in Washington has informed the US that his government has decided to cancel Somali registration of foreign ships that have used the Somali flag "for purposes beyond government control." The Somali action is apparently directed at ships--mainly French-owned--that have been in trade with North Vietnam.

The Somalis clearly hope the move will prompt the US to provide some economic assistance. Virtually all US aid to Somalia was suspended several years ago as a result of Somali-flag vessels trading with North Vietnam and Cuba. The loss of aid amounted to far more than the Somalis gained from the shipping registration arrangement. Until now, however, the independent-minded Somalis had refused to change their policy.

The Somalis have in the past made other efforts to improve relations with the US. However, their deep suspicions of the US, fed by Washington's ties to Ethiopia, Somalia's traditional enemy, have always limited progress toward better relations.

The US has recently given Mogadiscio a small amount of emergency drought aid. Somalia's economy has been hard hit by the long drought affecting sub-Saharan Africa.

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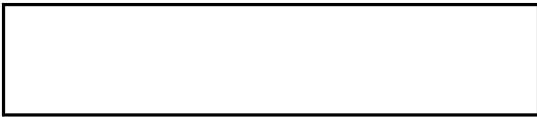
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