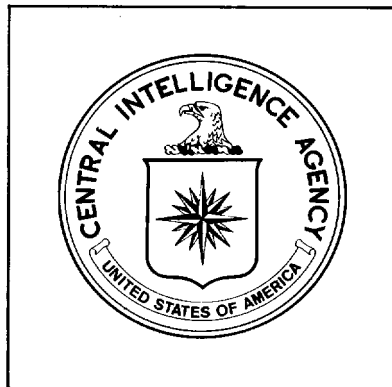


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140

No. 0691/75
June 13, 1975

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Classified by 005827
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§ 5B (1), (2), and (3)
Automatically declassified
on: Date Impossible to Determine

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

C O N T E N T S

Kuwait: Succession Problems	1
Malagasy Republic: Military Tribunal's Verdict Announced	3
Pakistan: Status of Tarbella Project	5

June 13, 1975

SECRET

Kuwait

Succession Problems

The poor health of Emir Sabah al-Sabah and the reported failing health of the Crown Prince raise questions about the Kuwaiti succession and the ruling family's prospects for retaining its dominant position over the long term.

The Emir, who is in his mid-fifties, has been in poor health for many years [REDACTED]

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The US embassy in Kuwait has now received several reports that the health of Crown Prince and Prime Minister Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the Emir's nephew, has deteriorated recently.

Should either the Emir or Crown Prince die or become incapacitated the al-Sabah family will be faced with a tough problem in naming a new crown prince. The Kuwaiti constitution restricts succession to the descendants of Mubarak al-Sabah, who ruled at the beginning of this century. Family practice has been to limit eligibility to the branches of the family originated by two of Mubarak's sons, Jabir and Salim. The al-Sabahs have sought to maintain intra-family peace by alternating the emirship between the two branches. It has not always been able to do so, however; the last two emirs have both come from the Salim line. The present Crown Prince is a Jabir.

In the Salim branch of the family, the strongest candidate to move up the political ladder is the controversial Jabir al-Ali, the deputy prime minister and minister of information. [REDACTED]

Interior and Defense Minister Saad Abdallah, who may be in the running, is reportedly both capable and

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June 13, 1975

1

SECRET

able to get along with all factions of the family. He faces a major impediment, however, in the fact his mother was a black slave--a serious drawback in a lineage-conscious society. The current ruler's oldest son, Salim al-Sabah, the minister of social affairs and labor, is considered not well qualified and too young to become Crown Prince.

In the event the position of Crown Prince becomes vacant first, the Jabir branch would be hard put to come up with a suitable candidate. Foreign Minister Sabah al-Ahmad is perhaps the best qualified member of the Jabir branch, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Other Jabiris now in government are all too young, inexperienced, and lack a following.

[REDACTED] the combination of poor health at the top, coupled with intra-family squabbling and the lack of truly outstanding candidates in the wings presents a situation of potential instability. This is particularly true now that the position of the al-Sabahs is being eroded by internal political developments. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

June 13, 1975

2

SECRET

SECRETMalagasy Republic*Military Tribunal's Verdict Announced*

The verdict of a military tribunal hearing the case of 33 defendants accused of complicity in the assassination last February of head of state Richard Ratsimandrava will probably keep alive the ethnic tensions that have troubled Madagascar since January.

The tribunal on June 12 found only three of the defendants guilty and sentenced them to five years hard labor and heavy fines. Those acquitted include former president Tsiranana, socialist party leader Andre Resampa, and Colonel Brechard Rajaonarison, who led the revolt of a paramilitary police unit in January. About 200 other defendants were granted amnesty in May.

Almost all the defendants are members of coastal tribes, the traditional rivals of the Merina tribe of central Madagascar. Despite the absence of hard evidence linking the bulk of the defendants to the assassination, many Merina are likely to believe that coastal members of the ruling military directory, established after Ratsimandrava's assassination, used behind-the-scenes influence to secure the release of most of the accused.

The 18-member directory, which includes representatives of the main tribal groups and all security forces, is expected soon to establish a new government and name a single head of government. The primary task of the new government will be to find ways to dampen the ethnic antagonisms that threaten to create a serious split between the coastal-dominated gendarmerie and the Merina-dominated army. It will also have to deal with a sluggish economy and food shortages that have led to high prices in the capital, Tananarive, where most Merina live.

(Continued)

June 13, 1975

3

SECRET

SECRET

Commander Didier Ratsiraka, a coastal tribesman and the leader of the directory's radical faction, is the most likely choice to become head of government. He has support among both the coastals and the Merina, although some Merina believe he was primarily responsible for the tribunal's favorable treatment of the coastal defendants. Another contender is Major Soja, a gendarmerie officer who is more moderate than Ratsiraka. He is currently minister of rural development. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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June 13, 1975

4

SECRET

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Pakistan

Status of Tarbella Project

Repair work on Pakistan's massive Tarbella dam is ahead of schedule, and water may be available from the dam to irrigate the rice and cotton crops late this summer and the next winter wheat crop in the fall.

Tarbella is not likely to bring self-sufficiency in foodgrain to Pakistan for several years. Farmers in the Indus Valley will have to develop the skills for the more intensive cultivation Tarbella waters will make possible. An increase in the next winter wheat crop depends on use of high-yield varieties, which in turn require a controlled water supply and the careful application of fertilizer and pesticides. Stocks of high-yield seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides are inadequate for the 9-million-ton harvest Islamabad has targeted.

Squabbling among the provinces has interfered with planning the use of Tarbella waters. A top-level committee is working on a plan for allocating the waters, but we are not certain when, or even if, a decision will be made. Under these circumstances, the next winter wheat crop is not likely to be more than 10 percent greater than the last crop. (CONFIDENTIAL)

25X1A



June 13, 1975

5

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