

PUB STAFF

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15 February 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

39-228583/1

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15 February 1963

T H E W E E K I N B R I E F
(Information as of 1200 EST 14 Feb)

IMPACT OF THE IRAQI COUP ON THE NEAR EAST Page 1

The coup in Iraq on 8 February has reverberated throughout the Arab world and has encouraged various proponents of a pan-Arab state, especially in Syria. Cairo realizes that the new regime in Baghdad will be an independent one and is promoting friendly relations with it. At the same time, the UAR is trying to capitalize on the uncertainty engendered by the coup by stepping up its call for the overthrow of "reactionary" regimes in Syria and Jordan. The new Iraqi Government, meanwhile, is consolidating its control by arresting local Communists and suppressing all pro-Nasir activities.

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

WEEKLY REVIEW

IMPACT OF THE IRAQI COUP ON THE NEAR EAST

The coup in Iraq on 8 February has reverberated throughout the Arab world.

Its greatest repercussions have come in Syria where the struggle for power has intensified. Syrian socialist Baathists, including both feuding factions, are greatly encouraged by the sudden success of their fellow ideologists in Baghdad and now are pushing for a change of regime in Damascus. Their objective is to gain power either peaceably or by coup, and then to negotiate for union with Iraq.

The coup in Iraq has created such a bandwagon atmosphere in Syria for union with Iraq that Syrian Foreign Minister Asad Mahasin confided to the American ambassador on 12 February that even President Qudsi is toying with the idea. Mahasin said the Azm cabinet had "fallen apart" and that there was no Syrian government.

Political alignments among Syria's politicians and army officers are likely to change with great rapidity during the days ahead as the various blocs align their forces.

The new Iraqi regime, headed by figurehead president Abd al-Salam Arif, is moving rapidly to normalize the situation. The 21-man cabinet is dominated by members of the Baath party. It also includes a few representatives from other nationalist parties and two Kurds. Arif was appointed in an effort to attract nationalist support for

the regime, and he is under strict wraps imposed by the Baathist leaders. The leaders emphasize that they intend to return to civilian government soon.

The coup may lead to a settlement of the 20-month-old Kurdish revolt. The new regime is likely to respond eagerly to any overture from rebel leader Barzani.

Large numbers of Communists are being rounded up throughout the country. Armed Communist resistance was particularly bitter in al-Kazemain, an old and traditionally troublesome Baghdad suburb.

Iraqi authorities are discouraging pro-UAR activities and have banned the distribution of pictures of Nasir and even of Arif.

Nasir is attempting to capitalize on the Iraqi coup as an expression of his brand of Arab nationalism, but Cairo realizes that the Iraqi regime desires to be independent of his influence. Meanwhile, the clandestine UAR radio is calling for the overthrow of the Syrian, Jordanian, and Saudi regimes.

The Jordanian Government, at first alarmed by the Iraqi coup, now has canceled a state of alert ordered for its army and air force. The government also had considered establishing martial law but finally decided against it. [redacted]

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