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5 JUL 1972

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Washington Meetings with Kurdish Representatives

1. Through arrangements made by the Shah of Iran, [REDACTED], personal representatives of Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, met on 30 June 1972 with Director Helms, Colonel Richard Kennedy, and CIA officer [REDACTED]. The substance of that meeting is covered in this memorandum. Additional background information and details to support the Kurdish requests for assistance are attached herewith as provided to CIA representatives by [REDACTED] during extensive discussions on 1 July 1972.

2. As the primary spokesman for the visitors, [REDACTED] opened the 30 June meeting by conveying the personal greetings of Mulla Barzani to President Nixon and the American people. He expressed Barzani's appreciation for this long-sought opportunity to present the Kurdish case directly to the United States Government and invited complete frankness on the part of both sides. [REDACTED] then provided a short historical review of the Kurdish movement and its fight for autonomy within Iraq. He followed with a geopolitical description of Kurdistan's position as the only remaining obstacle to total Soviet control of Iraq and the resultant implications to other countries in the area, particularly Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf states. He spoke in some detail concerning joint Soviet and Iraqi efforts to bring the Kurds under the control of the Ba'thi regime in Baghdad. He noted in particular the intensification of direct Soviet political pressures on Kurdish leaders, including visits to Mulla Barzani by leading members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. [REDACTED] reported on Soviet demands to Mulla Barzani in late June 1972 for prompt replies to previous Soviet overtures for the Kurds to join a National Front Government in Iraq. He pictured the Soviet effort as a supplement to Iraqi economic, military, and terrorist activities aimed at destroying Barzani and the political leadership of the Iraqi Kurds. [REDACTED] said that Barzani and other Kurdish leaders do not believe that they can resist this combination of Soviet and Iraqi pressure for much more than six months without significant foreign assistance. If such aid is not forthcoming, the Kurds believe that within six months they will either have to reach a political compromise with the Iraqi

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central government or fight to a sure defeat.

3. [REDACTED] stressed that Barzani wishes increased foreign assistance not just to defend his area from the Soviets and Iraqis, but preferably to make Kurdistan a positive element on the side of the United States and its friends and allies in the Middle East, notably Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf states. Further, [REDACTED] explained Mulla Barzani's conviction that the Soviets are now controlling events in Iraq and that time is running out for the West and its allies bordering that country. Barzani believes that Kurdistan, albeit small, could exploit its strategic location and fighting potential as an effective tool in a free world effort to reverse the trend of Soviet expansion in the Middle East and to regain the initiative for the free world and its allies in that area. In this context, he noted that Iraqi oil resources are located primarily in the Kurdish area. A strong Kurdistan could thus be a major voice in the oil policies of the Iraqi Government.

4. [REDACTED] specified that in the context outlined above, Mulla Barzani sought United States political, financial, military, and intelligence assistance as follows:

a. Recognition of the Kurdish objective of autonomy and the continuance of direct secret contacts between the Kurdish movement and the American Government;

b. Financial support sufficient to turn the Kurds into an offensive military force with the objective of either bringing down the Ba'thi Government in Baghdad or at least tying up the majority of Iraqi military forces in indefinite combat in order to eliminate the Iraqi regime as a Soviet-controlled threat to American and free world interests and allies in the area;

c. Provision of military assistance;

d. Establishment of an intelligence liaison between the Kurds and the United States, to include provision of assistance to Kurdish intelligence.

5. In presenting the request above for continuing direct contacts between their leadership and the United States Government, [REDACTED] said that Mulla Barzani recommends [REDACTED] presence, temporary or permanent, in Haj Umaran, Barzani's [REDACTED]. As an alternative, the Kurdish movement would accept a contact in any feasible location as preferred by the United States Government. [REDACTED] commented that Mulla

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Barzani, in turn, looks forward to visiting the United States whenever political conditions would so permit. [REDACTED] stressed that in return for the American assistance requested above, Mulla Barzani was prepared to commit his movement and his fighting forces to the policies of the United States Government. [REDACTED] added that prior to their departure from Washington, he and [REDACTED] would provide the background and details for their requests to [REDACTED] (see attachments).

6. [REDACTED] completed his presentation by saying that he felt Mulla Barzani's concerns and requests above were very relative to President Nixon's reference in his press conference of 29 June to the threat to world peace represented by Soviet adventures in the Middle East. [REDACTED] said that the current Soviet-Iraqi effort to control Kurdistan would be the final chapter in the Soviet adventure of turning Iraq into a satellite state, which in turn would threaten American interests in the Middle East.

7. [REDACTED] noted that he and [REDACTED] carried with them a tiger skin from Kurdistan as a gift for President Nixon from Mulla Barzani. He said he would send this gift to the Director to forward to the President on behalf of the Kurdish leader. He closed by saying that Mulla Barzani hoped that the arrival of his representatives in Washington so close to America's celebration of its independence on 4 July would encourage the United States Government to respond positively to this Kurdish appeal for assistance in maintaining Kurdish independence.

8. Director Helms thanked [REDACTED] for their visit to Washington and commended [REDACTED] for his most able presentation of the position and requirements of the Kurdish people and their leadership. He said that he and Colonel Kennedy have been authorized by Dr. Kissinger to express the sympathy of the United States Government for the Kurdish movement under Mulla Barzani. Mr. Helms noted that the very presence of the Kurdish representatives in his office was proof of our position and readiness to consider their requests for assistance. The Director said that the United States Government desires to continue the relationship with the Kurdish movement which had been officially initiated by the presentation of [REDACTED].

9. [REDACTED]

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10. The Director then asked [REDACTED] to provide [REDACTED] with the details of the Kurdish financial and military needs as quickly as possible so the United States Government could consider them promptly. Mr. Helms recognized that time is critical for the Kurds and that our Government would make every effort to decide what it could do and then provide such assistance as quickly as possible. He indicated that the United States Government's response would be conveyed to Mulla Barzani through [REDACTED] which we would arrange. Director Helms cautioned that it would be very difficult for the United States to provide military equipment directly to Kurdistan without American involvement becoming public knowledge. He suggested that we might have to consider channeling any such aid through the [REDACTED] or Iranian governments. The Director stipulated that secrecy would be an absolute requirement in this new relationship and that the relationship could indeed be soured by a failure to honor our need for such secrecy.

11. [REDACTED] responded that the Kurdish leadership understood our requirement for secrecy and was ready to carry out all arrangements exactly as desired by our side and to handle all of our aid and assistance exactly as we dictated. He noted as an indication of the good faith in this respect that only the Iranian Government was aware of the Kurdish visit to Washington. [REDACTED]

12. Colonel Kennedy expressed Dr. Kissinger's appreciation for the excellent presentation which gave us a clearer perception of the precarious position of Kurdistan and of its potential to play a role in the Middle East. He also commended [REDACTED] for an outstanding presentation on behalf of Mulla Barzani. The meeting then ended with an agreement that the visitors would meet further with [REDACTED] to provide the details to support their general presentation to the Director and Colonel Kennedy.

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Attachments:

- A - Political
- B - Financial
- C - Military
- D - Intelligence

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POLITICAL

Background

The primary goal of the Kurdish movement (people) in Iraq is autonomy for the Kurdish area of that country. The autonomy desired is comparable to the autonomy of a state in the United States with its control of education and other basic social services to its citizens. It is not in any degree comparable to full independence. A secondary goal of the movement is to promote democracy as the political system of government in Iraq.

The most important political aspect of Kurdish relations with any government, including the central government of Iraq, is, therefore, the recognition by that government of Kurdish autonomy within the independent republic of Iraq as legitimate, legal, and acceptable.

This autonomy was first recognized in the "Christmas Declaration" of 24 December 1922, in which the British specifically recognized Kurdish autonomy and granted the Kurds the authority to govern their areas. Unfortunately, this declaration was never recognized in practice by the British and Iraqi Arabs, which in turn led to a succession of Kurdish revolts. The aim of the Kurds during such fighting was to gain recognition in practice for the legal official autonomy formally granted to them in the "Christmas Declaration".

After the Qasim coup d'etat of 14 July 1958, the Iraqi Government promulgated a provisional constitution, Article 3 of which recognized that the Kurds and Arabs would be partners in governing the nation. This was never acknowledged in practice, however, and by 1961 'Abd-al-Karim had, in fact, begun a major effort to crush the Kurdish movement. He closed the offices of the Kurdish Democratic Party (the political organization representing the Kurdish movement), shut down the Party's newspapers, sent Iraqi troops into Kurdistan, and tried to settle Arab tribes in the Kurdish areas.

In response to these actions, Mulla Mustafa Barzani organized a Kurdish resistance effort in 1961 with only 600 armed men. By 1963 the movement's objective of autonomy for Iraqi Kurds had been crystallized in the minds of Barzani and his followers. This period of combat lasted, on and off, until 11 March 1970 when Barzani signed a settlement with the Ba'thi government in Baghdad. The settlement represented the clearest recognition that any Iraqi Government had offered of the Kurdish demand for autonomy. This, plus the increasing inability of

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Barzani and his leaders to support their population's social needs during prolonged combat, led to the Kurds' acceptance of this settlement.

A few months later the Ba'thi regime of Saddam al-Tikriti started planning the destruction of the Kurdish leadership. The Ba'this subsequently tried to assassinate Mulla Barzani and his son Idris.

Ba'thi efforts to subdue the Kurds continue today, in concert with intensive and extensive political pressures from the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria, and other Communist nations. To further protect its satellite regime in Baghdad, the Soviet Union has pressured Egypt, a long-standing enemy of the Ba'th Party, to adopt a more friendly posture toward Iraq, and convinced even the Syrians, who represent an opposing faction of the Ba'th Party, to terminate their hostile actions against Iraq. These developments have combined with the reign of assassination and torture by the Iraqi Ba'th, under Saddam al-Tikriti, to make Iraq a Soviet satellite, even though, just as in Czechoslovakia, the majority of the population hates the regime. However, the calculated terror and brutality of the Ba'this keep them subdued.

Kurdistan is now the only obstacle to complete Soviet dominance of Iraq through Saddam al-Tikriti. Once that is accomplished the Soviets will be able to utilize Iraq and South Yemen (Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen) to subvert the weak, fledgling Persian Gulf states in a pincers movement of subversion. The Kurds have intelligence that South Yemeni leader, 'Abd-al-Fatah Isma'il, has agreed with Kosygin to play such a role in the Gulf in concert with the Iraqis.

The current state of Barzani's forces allows the Kurdish movement to maintain only a weak defensive posture against the combined forces of their enemies. Mulla Barzani estimates that with the current level of assistance from the Iranians and [REDACTED] he can do no more than fight a delaying action against the regime in Baghdad. He feels that within six months he will either have to reach a settlement tantamount to political surrender or he will have to expend his forces and the Kurdish leaders in a short period of combat that will certainly lead to their final defeat.

Barzani is not seeking merely sufficient aid to enable him to defend Kurdistan from the Iraqis and Soviets. That is only his minimum objective. He would prefer to receive political, financial, and military support sufficient for the Kurds to

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leave their defensive posture to become an offensive force against the Iraqis and their Soviet allies on behalf of the United States and its friends in the Middle East. Hopefully, under such conditions, Kurdish forces could combine with anti-Ba'thi Iraqi Arabs to either overthrow the pro-Soviet regime in Baghdad or to so embroil that regime and its forces in combat that it would no longer represent a threat to Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or the Persian Gulf states. While recognizing their role as small in an area-wide context, the Kurdish leaders believe they could, nevertheless, make a significant contribution to protecting and even advancing the interests of the United States and its allies in the Middle East. It is this latter point that the Kurdish representatives here wish to stress most strongly. They emphasize that Mulla Barzani is willing to commit his movement to act in concert with United States area objectives and policy guidance in return for the assistance Kurdistan needs. The Kurdish representatives picture such cooperation as consistent with the shared political philosophy of Kurdistan and the United States, i.e., freedom of people to live as they wish and to govern their own affairs.

More specifically, the Kurdish representatives here seek recognition by the United States of the Kurdish political objective of autonomy, as it has previously been recognized by governments in the Middle East, including the central government in Baghdad, the Soviet Union, and other Communist nations. The Kurds realize that, because of the need for secrecy in any established relationship between them and the United States Government, such sympathy and recognition for their position would have to remain a secret indefinitely. They would, however, hope that as opportunities arise, the United States would quietly, but publicly note its recognition of Kurdistan as a politically autonomous entity within the independent nation of Iraq.

When [REDACTED] called on the Shah of Iran on 4 June, the Shah committed himself fully to two possible courses of action consistent with the Kurdish objective of autonomy. The first course, and that preferred by the Shah, would be to utilize Kurdish and anti-Ba'th Arab Iraqis to bring down the Ba'thi government in Iraq. The second course would be as a minimum to support an autonomous Kurdistan within Iraq which could stand on its own feet and resist all attempts to crush it. This is the clearest recognition of Kurdish autonomy ever received from the Iranians.

The Kurdish movement also desires the assistance of the United States Government, as it is able in the future, to convince Iran and Turkey that the Kurdish movement in Iraq has no

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territorial or political ambitions regarding the Kurdish people in either Iran or Turkey. Barzani's movement is particularly concerned about the Turkish Government which has steadfastly refused to have any contact with the Iraqi Kurds despite the fact that not a bullet has been fired on their mutual borders with Turkey during the past ten years. On the contrary, the Kurdish movement has in effect protected the security of both Turkey and Iran's borders with Kurdistan. This in turn secures most of Iran and Turkey's border with hostile Iraq. The Kurds would appreciate the good offices of the United States Government in putting the Kurds into direct contact with the Turkish Government and expressing the readiness of the Iraqi Kurds to sign any border guarantees desired by either the Turks or the Iranians. The latter two countries can write whatever guarantees they desire regarding current borders and the Kurds will sign them.

Last, but not least, the Kurdish movement requests the United States Government to continue the direct contact established between them for the first time on 30 June 1972. The Kurdish movement recognizes that such direct political contacts would have to remain secret indefinitely.

As a result of the discussions of 30 June 1972 in Washington, D.C., the Kurdish representatives, [REDACTED] believe they have received an expression of sympathy for Kurdish existence as an autonomous, political, and geographic entity within the independent nation of Iraq. They understand that the United States Government has agreed to continue direct contact with their political leadership

[REDACTED]

Finally, they understand that the United States Government will consider as soon as possible the Kurdish requests for financial and military assistance and advise of its decision

[REDACTED]

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