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Additional Notes on Possible Iraq, Syria, Lebanese Reactions to MIEDO

1. Lebanon:

(a) The Christian half of Lebanon would in general be eager to cooperate fully with MIEDO at any time. The Lebanese Government however will adhere to traditional policy of following, not leading, the other Arab states. Therefore, Lebanon should not be considered as an important element in the MIEDO problem.

(b) Lebanon will cooperate with the United States without MIEDO. The President has already stated that Lebanon would be available as a base for U.S. forces in war with or without an agreement. It is doubted if similar assurances would be so freely given to the British or French.

(c) It is probable that popular opinion in the Lebanon is against MIEDO and attacks from both the right and left political parties can be expected whenever the MIEDO issue comes up. For example, both candidates for Chamoun's seat are united on one issue--anti-MIEDO. Like being anti-Communist in the American elections, such a position appears essential for NE political candidates.

(d) It is too early to tell whether the present Lebanese Government is or will be strong enough to accept MIEDO over popular and political opposition. An appraisal of the advantages and risks to the U.S. which may be produced by MIEDO however, should take into consideration the distinct possibility that the Lebanese Government, as some other NE Governments, might fall on the issue of accepting military alliance with the West.

2. Syria:

(a) Shishikli is a military man, wants military help, military advisors and basically is attracted to MIEDO. However, Shishikli is more concerned with Israel than with Russia and could be expected to accept any military assistance with Israel predominantly in mind.

(b) Shishikli states that before he could consider MIEDO, progress must be made on resettlement of refugees and removal of Israel-Syria boundary problems.

(c) Shishikli/

(c) Shishikli for the time being does not consider himself politically in position to sign even economic agreements with the United States or France. For the same reason he has not accepted U.S. military aid. He has been against agreements in principle. He resists publicity involving cooperation with the West in any form. For the public he is belligerently neutral.

(d) Recent months have not increased Shishikli's stability in his own country. It is difficult to tell whether the trend is towards strengthening or weakening his position. Suffice it to say that his position is and can be expected to continue to be one of questionable stability. It is believed that he could not make a gesture towards military cooperation with the West at the present time; he apparently will not until the two issues he has mentioned above are settled. Since these issues will not be settled for some months, to force him to take a position now might either result in refusal or serious jeopardy to his political position. Political coup or assassination is always possible in Syria. Since the United States Government in general supports Shishikli and believes that he is the best available leader for Syria, it would be against the U.S. interest to place him on the spot at this time. The U.S. should, therefore, work for improvements with respect to the two problems Shishikli has mentioned; work to strengthen the Shishikli Government to a point where Shishikli can undertake unpopular programs and continue efforts to improve public opinion towards the West.

(e) The above paragraphs would not militate against an informal, personal, highly confidential exploration of the MEXO problem with Shishikli personally, and other ranking members of the Syrian government. Such an approach would have in fact many advantages such as bringing Shishikli in on "the ground floor", paving the way for possibly a later acceptance of MEXO, diminishing the full impact of criticism by the opposition, producing useful suggestions, etc.

3. Iraq:

(a) Contrary to existing political conditions in Syria and Lebanon, Iraq perhaps has the government which could lead the people into MEXO against their own desires. In Nuri the West has a highly skilled, highly experienced politician who has been able to put across an unpopular oil agreement. There are no surface indications that Nuri's skill and power have diminished. Nuri claims that the latest petitions and boycott of elections which all political parties other than his own have agreed to present no serious problem. He claims that he can handle this developing opposition easily. Developments in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iran would seem to subject this confidence to some question. It is to be remembered that the Iraq Government was equally confident about the Portsmouth Treaty which resulted in

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virtual revolution in Iraq. It is also to be remembered that Foreign Minister Jamali was bitterly assailed for an objective speech which set forth severe Iraqi terms for cooperation with the West. This might be a straw in the wind with respect to formal Iraqi approval of military alliance with the West, even with strong government.

(b) Assuming, however, that Nuri is as effective in overcoming the opposition as he claims, Iraq approval of MEDO remains highly doubtful. Nuri himself has clearly stated his own views with respect to MEDO. They are that MEDO would do more to damage conditions in the Middle East, and by inference, to relations between the Middle East and West than it would do to improve them. Nuri consequently depreciates MEDO and its desirability. He prefers alternatives such as Western support for the Arab Mutual Security Pact or bilateral Western support for Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia.

4. Conclusions:

(a) A draft of MEDO concepts should be given to individual top officials in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon for their highly confidential, unofficial study and comments. The problems of who makes the approach and when are less important than the secrecy, the early and the informal approach. Even if MEDO is turned down flatly, the West may gain political advantages by having made the offer.

(b) Following this initial approach, it would not be disadvantageous if a long period develops before Arab states agree to a formal approach. At the present time we have limited military assistance which we can give Arab states and they will expect military assistance in quantity and quality with MEDO. We may lose little by timing our formal approaches to a time when we can better contribute to Middle East defense. This time factor also applies to the Pentagon psychology which has not come around to a positive position on defense of the Middle East. Such delays after the informal approach should also minimize the chance of any serious misfiring which might set back Western relations with the Arab world.

(c) During this period of waiting and discussion, the West should continue to work on the two principal keys to MEDO success; i.e. improvement of public opinion towards the West, and strengthened leadership in NE governments. Without one of these two, MEDO acceptance may be more dangerous than desirable.

(d) France, Great Britain and Turkey should be urged to accept our approach which is to give Arab states the leading role or a belief that they have a leading role in the defense of their own area. For example, if Arab states cannot accept MEDO at this time, we should not, as the British and Turks suggest, go ahead anyway. What we should do is to proceed

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as Ray Hare suggests by working with the British and Turks secretly on a real military defense of the Middle East. MREDO should not officially proceed without Arabs.

(e) We should only work with those powers who are prepared to contribute to the defense of the Middle East and those powers which are acceptable to the states in the Middle East. Thus we should restudy the desirability of including Commonwealth countries in Middle East defense.

(f) Consideration should be given to alternatives to MREDO in the event Arab states find themselves unable to accept MREDO. This could be cooperation with the Arab Mutual Security Pact or it could mean continuation of the existing arrangements which may be the most practical militarily and the least dangerous politically. For example, bilateral arms assistance to Middle East countries might be sufficient for our political and military purposes. Present plans seem adequate and Middle East States seem reasonably content with existing procedures. They are able to get arms from the U.S., the UK, France and Germany. Although better coordination of arms and arms programs would be desirable, such military considerations are not of overriding importance since the military potential of Arab states against Russian aggression cannot be more than negligible over the next few years.

As far as real military considerations are concerned, MREDO is not needed to assist us in maintaining our Dhahran Air Base and could conceivably jeopardize our position there. MREDO is not needed to obtain strategic bases in the Persian Gulf which could be made available without serious difficulty or formal agreements; there is no popular opinion in the Arab Sheikdoms to be overcome. No special agreements are needed to place elements of the U.S. fleet in the Persian Gulf. No special agreements are needed to permit bilateral discussions with Arab States in Washington or in the area. Indeed the rights which could be expected from a MREDO agreement such as formal permission to enter Arab territories in war might be of little real importance in the event of war. In fact it might prove easier to do what we wish militarily in event of a war without having stimulated opposition beforehand.

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