

Affairs
Lot File 76 D470
Folder Chron Correspondence
Ar Ambassador 1170
Box 9

GSA FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

~~SECRET~~

WHH
File:

Memorandum

TO : NEA/IRN - Mr. Miklos

DATE: February 27, 1970

FROM : NEA/ARP - William D. Brewer *WDB*

SUBJECT: Embassy Tehran's Recommendations for FY 1970 Military Sales

I have just noted a copy of Tehran's A-69 of February 14. While the USG decision with respect to future military credit sales to Iran is happily not the responsibility of this desk, I wish to enter strong exception to portions of the rationale advanced by Embassy Tehran as these involve considerations affecting Arab states on the western side of the Gulf.

The Embassy states that "hostile forces stand ready" to fill "a vacuum" which will assertedly be left in the Gulf region by the British departure. This may reflect information not available to us. If not, it would appear over-drawn if not inaccurate. The most serious theoretical threat to us in the Gulf in future would come from significant Soviet naval activities there. These I do not expect, but is hardly likely that Iran would feel able - or willing - to oppose them, particularly since Iran is one of only two Gulf states which have been hospitable to Soviet naval visits so far. As far as Arab forces are concerned, those of major powers (UAR, Syria, Iraq) are pinned down elsewhere by the Israelis and Kurds, and we see no sign that this situation is likely to be significantly altered. It is true that the removal of British forces will make them unavailable for security purposes, but local forces are fast a-building to cope with local security threats. Abu Dhabi now has military forces totalling over 4000, and a Hawker Hunter squadron is being activated. Bahrain, Qatar and Dubai also possess significant (in local terms) military and quasi-military establishments, totalling 4-5,000 men. And the Trucial Oman Scouts, which may be taken over by a new Arab federation, remains a well-drilled force of almost 2000 men. These forces would appear entirely adequate to cope with any local insurrection which can be dealt with in military terms.

The future threat to the Arab states of the Gulf is subversive, rather than military. For this purpose, substantial Iranian forces are likely to prove not only unnecessary but may be positively harmful. This is because substantial Iranian forces directed towards the Gulf area are likely to be regarded by the



NEA/ARP:WDBrewer:bdf

NEA, Office of Iran
Affairs,
Lot File
Folder
Box

~~SECRET~~

Arabs more as a threat than a reassurance. They could regard themselves as forced to the only countervailing support available, namely the major radical Arab states (UAR and/or Iraq) - unless, of course, one assumes an appeal to the USSR. The fact that PRSYG forces have attacked SAG units at Wadiyah is hardly relevant. This is not in the Gulf area, the Saudis have shown themselves able to contain this threat and the basic cause of that issue was a boundary problem. The latter do not exist in the Gulf area except vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia itself, and I find it hard to conceive of Iran intervening on either side in that one.

Tehran reporting persists in seeing more "tact and flexibility" in the Iranian position on the Tunbs and Abu Musa than is apparently visible to the Shaykhs of Ras al-Khaimah and Sharja. Since these worthies are prepared to do virtually everything Iran may want except surrender sovereignty over these islands, it seems clear that the Iranian position is, in fact, provocative and uncompromising. The Shah has shown statesmanship over the Bahrain issue, but on these lesser claims Iran still seems to be engaged in Tunb-thumping.

As to Iranian concern over future stability in Saudi Arabia, we welcome all efforts to strengthen our benighted clients. Because of Iran's well-known ties with Israel, however, as well as the suspicion raised in Arab breasts by Iranian military muscle-flexing vis-a-vis the Gulf, Iran must be exceedingly discreet and wary in assuring that what is done for Saudi Arabia actually contributes to the stability of the House of Saud rather than the reverse.

All of which is not to argue against our annual military credit sales tranche to Iran but rather to place in perspective some of the arguments adduced by Tehran in support thereof.

~~SECRET~~