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By WDP NARA Date 5/2/02

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PA/HO Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
June 21, 2006

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

**Memorandum of Conversation**

PART I OF II

DATE: March 20, 1969  
Brussels, Belgium

SUBJECT: Government of Iraq Efforts to Acquire Embassy Baghdad Compound

PARTICIPANTS: H.E. Marcel Dupret, Belgian Ambassador to Iraq  
Mr. George Moffitt, Jr., American Embassy, Brussels  
Rodger P. Davies, Deputy Assistant Secretary, NEA *RMD*

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Ambassador Dupret said that there was no question about the GOI's strong desire to acquire the Embassy property for security reasons. In his opinion there was no anti-American feeling involved; the government planned to convert the entire area between the main Karadat Mariam road and the Tigris River and between the two bridges into an official compound in which all government activities would be concentrated. It was proceeding with expropriations to accomplish this (see attached map).

In addition, it planned an inner security area for the Palace. To accomplish this, a dog-leg around the curve in Mansour Street would be built so that the entire point of land formed by the curve of the river could be sealed off and protected. The most vulnerable side of the Palace complex was that of the American Embassy compound which adjoined.

Ambassador Dupret said that in the turbulent atmosphere that is likely to prevail in Iraq, the Embassy is badly located insofar as its own security is concerned. During the attack on the Palace in the Fall of 1968, he had watched from across the river and seen the firing around and over the Embassy buildings: one shell had fallen in the garden of the Residence.

In these circumstances, the Ambassador thought the U. S. G. had three options. First, it could continue to disregard the request and try to put it off for as long as possible. In this case, he thought the government would begin to harass American citizens and interests. If we took this position,

we should

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we should develop some contingency plans to mount counter pressures. He thought we probably wanted less from Iraq than the Iraqis wanted from us. He thought we might consider such things as ousting the Iraqi Interests Section from Washington, making it difficult for Iraqis to get into the U. S. for technical and academic training, restricting exports of essential spares for the American-equipped sector of the Iraqi economy, etc.

A second option was to agree to the Iraqi request to send a team of officials to Baghdad to negotiate a settlement of the question. He advised against this unless we had reached a decision to sell.

The third option was to authorize the Belgian Embassy to negotiate with the Government of Iraq to get a formal note requesting purchase of the Embassy property and affirming an oral commitment given him by the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the GOI would not confiscate or nationalize the property but would resolve the question through negotiations. We should, Ambassador Dupret thought, agree to turn over the property only after the Government of Iraq had made available a replacement in the form of equivalent property and buildings constructed to our specifications.

I told the Ambassador that on my return to Washington I would put the problem to my colleagues and forward a recommendation for approval at higher levels. I agreed with him that some answer had to be made to the Iraqis.

On a related matter, the Ambassador said the Iraqi guards who occupied the date grove between the Embassy and the Palace had begun to raise the height of the wall of the compound, apparently as part of a general effort to improve security. Although a raised wall would have the advantage of cutting off the view of soldiers who thronged to the roofs of shacks next door to look at the girls in the Embassy pool, he had protested to the Foreign Ministry on the basis of failure to get permission of the owner and the work was stopped. At his behest, the Foreign Ministry had given him a note officially requesting him to seek U. S. G. approval for raising the wall.

I said that if the GOI were to agree that the construction was not to involve any expense for the U. S. G. and that it would be of similar construction to the existing wall, I thought we could give approval. Ambassador Dupret said the Iraqi note conveyed these assurances.

Mr. Moffitt undertook to pass this request to the Department for approval.

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