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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

APR 8 - 1969

Honorable Thomas E. Morgan
Chairman, Committee on
Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on
House Resolutions 226 and 227 on the subject of the
recent executions in Iraq.

The Secretary of State announced publicly on January 27
that the executions in Iraq were, on humanitarian
grounds, a matter of deep concern to the United States
and that they presented a spectacle that was repugnant
to the conscience of the world. On behalf of this
Government Ambassador Yost sent a letter on January 29
to the President of the UN Security Council in which
he said that, although the United States recognizes
the right of any government to administer justice to
any of its citizens, the manner in which the Government
of Iraq conducted the trials and executions scarcely
conformed to accepted standards of human rights and
human dignity. He also stated that the spectacular
nature of these trials and hangings seemed designed
to arouse emotions and intensify the explosive situation
in the Middle East, and that their repetition would
make more difficult the search for peace in that area
of the world.

Since that time seven additional persons--all Moslems--
have been executed in Baghdad under circumstances similar
to those attending the executions of January 27. (For
your information, only eleven of the fourteen executed

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2

on January 27 were hanged in Baghdad; the other three executions took place in Basra. Although none of the executions was actually carried out in public, the bodies were later displayed for several hours on gibbets in the central squares of both cities.)

While we are, therefore, fully sympathetic to the concern that prompted the resolutions, we do not believe it would be advisable from a practical standpoint for the United States to seek a Security Council meeting for the purpose of preserving the human rights of the people of Iraq. As you may know, on several occasions since the June War the Security Council has taken up the general question of protection of human rights of the inhabitants in the area of conflict. It is not at all certain that, given its present composition, the Council would agree to take up the matter again solely with respect to the situation in Iraq. Even if it should do so, we doubt that Council consideration would be likely to influence the Government of Iraq in the direction of better observance of human rights. Indeed, Security Council discussions of the subject, with the harsh words and hardened positions that sometimes characterize them, can have a negative effect on the condition and prospects of the people of Iraq, especially those in minority status.

As a practical matter, the only means that could help improve the situation would be those that obtain the cooperation of the Government of Iraq. Since the United States has no representation in that country, and in view of the intensity of anti-American feeling on the part of official circles there, we have acted in the belief that initiatives toward alleviating the plight of minority groups should best be undertaken by third parties. Accordingly, we have cooperated actively in this regard

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Authority 100969000
By FBI NARA Date 5/31/07

3

with friendly governments, voluntary agencies and international organizations. We will continue to do so, in the conviction that the interests of those Iraqis deprived of their human rights are better served by such quiet and persistent efforts than by a public approach that could worsen their plight.

The Bureau of the Budget advises that from the standpoint of the Administration's program there is no objection to the submission of this report.

by phone
4-1-69

Sincerely yours,

William B. Macomber, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

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Clearances:

UNP: Miss Brown *held per B*

S/R: Mr. Abernethy (in substance)

NEA/ARN: Mr. Baas *per B* (in substance)

H: Miss Folger (on Boblitt)