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A-386

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

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INFO : AMMAN, KUWAIT, LONDON, TEHRAN, BRUSSELS

BRANCH

FROM : Amembassy BEIRUT

DATE: Sept. 22, 1969

SUBJECT : Iraq-Iran Relations: Rumored Activities of Bakhtiar

REF :

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION

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During the last few weeks rumors have circulated in Beirut to the effect that Teymour Bakhtiar, former head of the Iranian intelligence service who broke with the Shah and was exiled in 1961, is now in Baghdad organizing an anti-Shah movement. Last April, when Iran abrogated its 1937 treaty with Iraq concerning navigation on the Shatt al Arab river, Bakhtiar, who had only recently been released from prison in Lebanon, sent messages to Iraqi President Ahmad Hasan al Bakr expressing his support of Iraq. Baghdad press and radio at the time publicized a statement, allegedly from Bakhtiar, urging the Iranian people to rise against the Shah. It was also reported that Bakhtiar had asked for permission to reside in Baghdad. Though there has never been any official indication from Baghdad whether Bakhtiar's request was granted, reports from Tehran have alleged he is in Baghdad and directing a group known as the "Movement for the Liberation of Arabistan."

On September 11 the pro-IAR weekly as Sayyad carried a long interview with Bakhtiar. Though the article did not state where the interview had occurred, another article in the same issue indicated that the interviewer, reporter Salman, has recently been in Iraq. The essence of the interview is as follows:

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Bakhtiar believes Iran is on the brink of revolution. He accuses Iranian authorities of deliberately provoking the crisis with Iraq over the Shatt al Arab boundary to divert rising popular discontent with the Shah. Since there had been no problem with Iraq over the Shatt al Arab for more than thirty years, the timing of the present crisis shows that the Shah has become the "ally of Israel and American imperialism", which are anxious to have Iraq withdraw her forces from the eastern front against Israel. Bakhtiar described himself as leader of the "Iranian Movement Abroad" against the Shah and, citing the example of Lenin, said, "We must now struggle from abroad because we cannot enter Iran."

COMMENT: If in fact Bakhtiar is in Baghdad leading an anti-Shah movement, it might represent Iraq's response to reports alleging an increase in Iranian support of Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani. (The Beirut press has on several occasions quoted the official Iraq News Agency to the effect that Iranians have been infiltrating into northern Iraq to join Mulla Mustafa's forces. On September 13, Radio Baghdad claimed that thirty Iranians had been killed and fourteen captured while trying to infiltrate into northern Iraq.) It is hard to know how much in these reports is fact, and how much fantasy. It would seem unlikely that Bakhtiar would forsake the pleasures of living in Switzerland for ^{the} uphill task of trying to organize an anti-Shah movement, or that Bakhtiar would join the Arabistan movement.

PORTER

9