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PER SEC. 3.3(b)(1)(b)

The Situation in Kurdistan

1. Against the background of intensified fighting in Iraqi Kurdistan, it is important to note the growing involvement of the Soviet Union in events in Iraq. Until the last few years the Soviets preferred to manoeuvre between the Kurdish national camp and the Iraqi authorities and to maintain ties with both sides. However, recently the Soviet Union apparently decided to throw its full weight behind the Baath regime in Baghdad, a regime which she considers to be one of the main means of furthering her own interests in the Persian Gulf area.

2. The Soviet Union's special interest in bolstering the present Iraqi regime can be seen from the following:

- a) The consistent support for the Baath regime, especially since the signing of the Iraqi-Soviet treaty of friendship and cooperation in April 1972. Thus the Soviets have urged the Iraqi communists to cooperate with the present regime in Baghdad, tried to bring about improved relations between Baghdad and Damascus, attempted to neutralize Iranian involvement in Iraq, and backed Iraq's nationalisation of I.P.C. assets in June 1972.
- b) Military aid including hundreds of tanks, dozens of aircraft as well as SS missiles. An increase of this aid was discussed during Marshal Grechko's last visit to Baghdad (end of March).
- c) The pressure exerted on Barzani to join the "National Front" (which is made up of the Baath and the Communist Party) to support the regime, to permit an Iraqi military presence in the Kurdish sectors along the border with Iran, and to facilitate Communist activity in Kurdistan. It will be recalled that in October 1973, the Iraqi regime tried to persuade the Kurds not to hinder the dispatch of Iraqi troops to Syria. This subject was discussed by Barzani's men with representatives from the Soviet embassy in Baghdad in October 1973, and with Boris Ponomarev, chairman of the foreign relations

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department of the Soviet CP central committee, during his visit to Baghdad and Kurdistan in November 1973.

d) Active participation in the fighting against the Kurds. Soviet advisers assist in the operation of the Iraqi air force and in the organisation of the logistic set-up of the Iraqi forces in the Kurdish area, and attempts are made to jam the broadcasts of the Kurdish radio station.

3. The main problems facing the Kurds are a shortage of ammunition, especially for artillery, and the lack of sufficient AA and AT capability. If the fighting continues for a long time, the Kurds will find it difficult to hold out against the Soviet backed Iraqi army (the Iraqis have concentrated in this area a force of more than four divisions, including about 400 tanks) and to defend their traditional strongholds in the heart of Kurdistan. However, the Kurds stand a good chance of holding out in the mountainous area provided that they have sufficient artillery and adequate supplies of AA and AT ammunition.

4. Should however, the Iraqi army succeed in overcoming the Kurdish resistance and weaken the Kurdish national camp as a political force, the position of both the Iraqi Baath regime and that of the Soviet Union as its patron will become even stronger. As a consequence, Baghdad and Moscow's freedom of manoeuvre in the region will grow and the Iraqi regime, with Soviet backing, will be able to resume and expand its subversive activity in Iran, Kuwait and other countries in the region.



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PER SEC. 3.3 (b)(1)(6)