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SIO Negd
Thamreet

16th February 1972

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Distributed Below

BORDER INCIDENTS AT HABARUT - FEBRUARY 1972

1. 101330D. 14 Land Rovers and 4 Bedford's of the PDRY army arrived at HABARUT from THAMOUD along the track that runs through Sultanate territory. Approximately 100 soldiers dismounted from these trucks and took up positions in the palm trees, which although on the Western side of the wadi, are in Sultanate territory, and on the Jebel above. These positions were vacated by nightfall, and the troops started on improvements to the PDRY Garrison defences.

2. 111000D Feb Seven men, armed with automatic weapons of Communist origin, and some of them wearing khaki shirts, surrounded the house of SALOAM bait GIDAD. The house is on the Eastern side of the wadi, well inside Sultanate territory. They stated to Sultanate Government Askars that they had families and palm trees on the Eastern side, and that they wished to visit them. They were told that nobody bearing PDRY Government arms had authority to enter the Sultanate, and that they should return to PDRY.

Comment. The main reasons for the PDRY patrol are thought to be:-

- a. A reaction to the apparent increase of force level is by the Sultanate on 8th January, and to the increased patrol activity since that date. A patrol of similar size was mounted after bin ASHOORS's attack in June 1971.
- b. The reinforcement of the PDRY Garrison.

It is probable that the majority of the soldiers constituting the patrol was from the Peoples' Guard that is under the direction of the PDRY Brigade responsible for the 5th and 6th Governorates. The PDRY forces in the 5th and 6th Governorates are not considered strong enough to provide regular troops for the reinforcement of any of their garrisons, and that the poor relations between regular troops and the local inhabitants would seem to indicate the suitability of indigenous irregulars for this task.

3. 111530D Feb Two Government Askars from the Sultanate fort approached the surrounded house on the way to their own fareeks. They were prevented from passing by the PDRY personnel, who after some sharp discussion opened fire on the two Government Askars. The fire was returned, and a small fire fight continued until a group of DG troops engaged the enemy with FN rifles. The enemy then withdrew to the area of the PDRY fort.

Comment. This is a further indication of the reluctance of PDRY forces to get involved in a major altercation with the Sultanate

/2...

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4. 12th of February. OC DG Tp HABARUT sent a letter to the Lieutenant commanding the PDRY Garrison, complaining at the previous day's events, and reiterating that nobody bearing arms, particularly automatic weapons should enter Sultanate territory, The following was received in reply :-

"Received your letter of today's date, and we let you know that the soldiers who went to the date palms only went there to see their families and date palms. Why did you send them away? They are sons of this area. Thanks."

Comment None of the soldiers who crossed the border have any property or close relations in the immediate area. The reference to 'sons of this area' may indicate that they are members of the Peoples' Guard. The referring to them as soldiers by the PDRY Garrison Commander is clear indication that, in HABARUT at least, PFLOAG is at one with NF and PDRY forces.

Later that day another letter was received in the handwriting of Lt HASSAIN, the PDRY Garrison Commander :-

"Officer Commanding bin Taimur's Fort. Exchange of letters between us this morning. Some of our soldiers have families and date palms on the Eastern side. When they went to see their families, your soldiers fired on them. This is not a good thing. You are all soldiers and have been ordered to shoot at us. We know this. Ensure your soldiers are told not to shoot at us again."

Comment. The only soldiers with families on the Eastern side of the Wadi are members of PFLOAG. See last comment above.

5. 1121330D Feb. OC PDRY Garrison delivered a speech from the steps of the new medical centre to an audience of approximately 150 soldiers and civilians. The main points of the speech were as follows:-

"Long live the Republic and out with Qaboos! We are all soldiers of the Republic. We have a hospital, and we have blankets. We have 300 men. And I tell you, long live the Republic and out with Qaboos, we have more than 500 men in the Army and we can take Habrut - Qaboos has no people. Look in front of you - you will see only 20 men, and they only have one vehicle. We have 30 vehicles and we have artillery and anti-aircraft guns. We have many machine guns, and after three days seven more vehicles will arrive containing three shops and the hospital for the people. Qaboos has nothing to offer the people. Friends look at Habrut - all of it belongs to the Republic.

Comment. The strength of the PDRY forces is obviously exaggerated, just as the Sultanate strength is underestimated. It is not likely that the PDRY forces seriously intend to take over the whole of the HABARUT area, largely because of the Sultanate's air superiority. It is unfortunate that the comments on the lack of welfare facilities on the Sultanate side are largely true.

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6. 130800D Feb All of the vehicles that arrived on 10 February left HABARUT, except for one Land Rover. The loads were very much lighter, and it is estimated that 50 to 60 soldiers were left behind as reinforcement for the PDRY garrison.

Comment. Has mentioned above, work started on the improvement of the defensive positions. It remains to be seen just how extensive this work will be.

7. Final Comment. It is not thought likely that the incidents are enumerated above are the prelude to a major confrontation at have brought, but they do indicate the difficulty that exists for the Sultanate forces to react to such flagrant violations. It is suggested that some priority should be given to the following remedial measures:-

- a. A review of the force levels.
- b. The provision of clear orders regarding the delineation the border and action to be taken in the event of violations.
- c. Encouragement of planned development, including the provision of secure road communications.

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