

No. 1390

780.5/3-2853: Telegram

*The Chargé in Iraq (Ireland) to the Department of State*¹

SECRET

BAGHDAD, March 28, 1953—5 p. m.

1182. Minister of Defense Nuri Said has given me review of Iraq defense plans along similar lines as to British Ambassador (Embtel 1180²). He did not mention Anglo-Iraqi treaty, Arab secret pact nor Israel.

In re source of arms and equipment, his approach differed from that described by British Ambassador. Nuri emphasized to me his wish for best arms possible. If American tanks were better than British, he wanted them; similarly with planes, etc. Material should be placed in Middle East which would do job of "stopping the Russians".

Cost of expansion, over and above Iraq's contributions, had been estimated at least 60 million dinars over four years. Iraq expected put up cost barracks, airfields, clothing, locally procured equipment, starting with approximately 14 million in 1954 budget of about Iraqi dinars 40 million. Emphasized Iraq could not supply remainder without severely affecting its development program which, in view of our past encouragement, he felt sure we would not wish to see crippled.

Upon my suggestion that beginning might well be made on a reimbursable basis through 408(e) he professed inability to understand why this necessary. Grant had been given to Turkey as far back as 1947. We had built roads, etc., but Iraq did not ask for these. What we had done for Turkey in military aid we could surely do for Iraq. Iraq could be performing valuable services for the west. "Would not the resistance of Iraq on the Iranian frontier", he inquired, "be of direct service to American interests in the Persian Gulf?" The defense of Ruwanduz and Halabja in the north, Khanazin and Basra would do just that. Iraqis might not be able to do the whole job alone, but they would give time for Allied forces to arrive.

Apparent from conversation that one obstacle to signing 408(e) is belief by Ministers that it would bind Iraq to pay United States for equipment entire expansion program, a commitment not acceptable politically and because of impact on development program.

He proposed three steps looking toward United Kingdom-United States assistance in expansion of Iraq's defense forces:

¹ Repeated to London, Ankara, and Cairo.

² *Supra*.