

## No. 1395

781.5/3-2458 Telegram

*The Ambassador in Iraq (Berry) to the Department of State*<sup>1</sup>

CONFIDENTIAL

BAGHDAD, August 24, 1953—10 a. m.

127. Iranian events have jolted many highly placed Iraqi officials out of their lethargy. At last they see the menace to them of international Communism. They feel the urgent need to put Iraq's house in order and particularly to strengthen its defenses. They speak of Iraq today as being the second line of defense against Communist aggression in Near East and of its becoming the first line of defense should Tudeh take over Iran.

The moment therefore is propitious for extension of American military aid to Iraq in order to get maximum political return for United States. The Iraqis asked us officially on March 21 for military grant aid.<sup>2</sup> We replied on July 2 that we were studying their request, but could give no definite answer as legislation was still in Congress.<sup>3</sup> Now we are in a position to answer and the time is ripe locally to answer affirmatively.

I recommend that what United States does be directed toward a distinctive objective. We will lose maximum impact if we furnish funds for British to give equipment or if we ourselves give equipment and it is absorbed in overall Iraqi program. Our greatest impact can only come from creating something new with full American equipment. The Iraqi military plans call for a mountain brigade. I think it should be ideal if we picked this up and offered to equip within the next year or two such a brigade. Such action would (1) strengthen Iraq's defenses where they are most needed; (2) be tangible evidence of United States support of Iraqi interest in its own defense; (3) constitute a recognition of Iraq's place in Near East defense; and (4) should not alarm Israel as such a brigade would be suited for use in mountainous terrain and hence no menace to Israel.

BERRY

<sup>1</sup> Repeated to Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Jidda, Jerusalem, Tripoli, Tel Aviv, and Ankara.

<sup>2</sup> See telegram 1158 from Baghdad, Document 1388.

<sup>3</sup> Presumably, this reference is to the suggested reply transmitted to the Embassy in airgram 242, Document 1392.