

No. 1495

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Department of State*¹

SECRET

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3245. FonOff has for last several days been awaiting Pelham's full report on Saudi reply to UK proposal for arbitration and countered with earlier proposals for tripartite commission to conduct plebiscite in Buraimi area and fact finding commissions to demarcate boundaries in other disputed areas. Saudi reply makes quite clear that it regards Buraimi as separate from other boundary problems.

At same time, Saudis have also, according to FonOff, replied to recent UK protest regarding Turki's activities by stating that Buraimi is integral part of Saudi Arabia and that tribes in Oman owe allegiance to Ibn Saud. FonOff greatly concerned at what it regards as more categorical statement Saudi claims Buraimi and extension claims to Oman. It is currently deciding what action it shld take in circumstances. Possible line might be to suggest to Saudis that fact finding comm shld be sent to area and that any disputes which arise from fact finding comite's attitude shld be submitted to arbitration. FonOff regards it doubtful, however, that Saudis wld accept this compromise.

FonOff official told us there is growing feeling in FonOff that Saudis are banking on belief that UK will not use force to dislodge Turki. This belief also prevalent among tribes in area who have hitherto been loyal to local Sheikhs and Brit but who cannot understand why Brit have permitted Turki to maintain his present position. This factor, plus liberal use of money by Turki, has resulted in many of loyal inhabitants defecting to Saudis. Turki now pushing his activities further afield and FonOff official said there is some feeling in FonOff that only effective way to counteract this and to restore Brit position in area is by using force to dislodge Turki. Another possibility might be to make things uncomfortable for Turki by interfering with his food supplies, etc.

Emb off expressed strong opinion that force was not likely to be effective solution to problem. Saudi prestige deeply involved and not likely give up easily. Use of force wld inevitably mean problem being taken to UN and, in view similar problems which have come before that organization involving Asiatic and Western states,

¹ Repeated to Jidda and Dhahran.