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Middle East Situation

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D. Mont.)

Mr. President, one of the weak spots in the world today is the Middle East. The weakest, most difficult and most delicate situation, at present, exists in Syria. As a result of the recent coup d'état in that country we find the reins of control in the hands of men who, if not Communists, are closely allied to them, and who look to the Soviet Union for continued economic and military assistance.

The result is that our friends -- Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon -- now find themselves confronted with a dangerous situation on their borders. It also means that the pipe line from Iraq and the tap-line from Saudi Arabia -- part of the life-blood of Europe -- are now once again in grave danger. It means, also, that the Soviet Union has completed another leap-frog maneuver into the Middle East and it reinforces the fact that she is in the Middle East to stay.

Syria is the most heavily infiltrated nation in the Middle East and is becoming more and more dependent on the U.S.S.R. Its President, Shukri al-Kwatly is a fence-rider and its new Chief of Staff, Major General Afif Bizri, has close ties with Moscow.

What can the United States do? Under the Eisenhower Doctrine, it appears nothing can be done unless Syria attacks one of its neighbors and, in turn, victim of such an act of aggression appeals to us. Nevertheless, the Doctrine was and is an assertion to the effect that the U.S. would play a decisive part in maintaining the peace in the Middle East and that we would
fill the void created by the departure of Britain and France in that area.

I am fully aware of the difficulties which face President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles in the present situation. Secretary Dulles has been in constant touch with Congress and has kept the legislative leaders fully informed.

In an attempt to be helpful, I should like to offer the following suggestions:

1) The U.S. was primarily responsible for creating the Baghdad Pact. At present, we belong to the Pact's military, economic and anti-subversion committees. Let us take the final step and become a full-fledged member of the Pact.

2) The U.S. should request Lebanon and Jordan to become members of the Pact.

3) Sabotaging of the Iraq and Saudi Arabia pipelines would be considered an act of aggression against Iraq and Saudi Arabia and would be met under the terms of the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Mr. President, I approve of the wait and see, let the sands settle policy of the Administration at this time. If, however, the Communist hold becomes dominant, I would most respectfully refer the above suggestions to the President and Secretary Dulles and, if they find merit in them, urge that they give them their most serious consideration.