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Authority NLE 2010-99By MUK NLDDE Date 8/17/11~~CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN~~DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Division of Biographic IntelligenceAL-MAHDAWI, Fadhil 'Abbas (Col.)IRAQ

President of the Higher Military Court

Colonel Fadhil 'Abbas al-Mahdawi as President of the Higher Military Court, has assumed a role of one of the most powerful of the military leaders now in control of Iraq. It is difficult, and perhaps premature, to arrive at a definitive analysis of his position among the complex, erratic and competitive leadership which is struggling for power within the regime, however, there is no doubt, that as head of the military tribunal and by assuming a role of both judge and prosecutor in the court, Mahdawi has made signal contribution to the confused overt political scene in Iraq. Colonel al-Mahdawi is extremely aggressive, is anti-Western to the point of hatred and although it is not known whether he is a card carrying Communist he has taken a position which has given important support for the success of Communism and Soviet policy in Iraq. He has taken a position, more recently, of extreme animosity toward Egypt, and has been a major source of the Iraqi brand of the vitriolic propaganda verbiage emanating from Baghdad and from Cairo.

Little is known about Colonel Mahdawi's early life or career as a soldier. He has stated that he studied under General 'Abd al-Karim al-Qasim in the Military College and he is believed to have had some legal training in the Army. Just what part Mahdawi played in the July 14, Iraqi Revolution is not certain. A British source of information indicates that he was not one of the planners of the revolt, and was at the time a Lt. Colonel in command of a Guard Company at Musayib. Mahdawi, ascribes himself to a much greater role; in a statement to the Iraqi newspaper Al-Bilad, he claimed that he was assigned by General Qasim to take measures to prevent the supply of ammunition to the 1st Brigade and to the side of the old regime and said that he carried his duties so well as to arrest the Commander of the Brigade Brigadier Wafiq Arif, and thereby took command of the brigade himself. American Military sources agree, if Mahdawi's account were true, that his role was indeed an important one. It is important to note that al-Mahdawi is a brother-in-law of Prime Minister al-Qasim; that fact is suggested as a more revealing insight into the reasons behind his arrogance, license, and generally obnoxious behavior.

Colonel Mahdawi has used his position as President of the Military Tribunal as a platform to proliferate his invectives. Although proceedings were initially orderly, the Fadhil Jamali hearings in September 1958 gave Mahdawi opportunity for grandstanding and theatrics including hooting and jeering which he encouraged from the audience. The decline and removal of Col. 'Abd as-Salam al-'Arif's position of influence in the regime also coincided with Mahdawi's increasing diatribe. At the same time, the leftist and Communist press spread considerable material praising and defending Mahdawi's court procedures. His photographs received wide circulation and are now surpassed in number only by Prime Minister al-Qasim.

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AL-MAHDAWI, Fadhil 'Abbas (Col.) (continued)

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The following is a sampling of al-Mahdawi's utterances: During a trial on January 12, 1959, "My late father was a butcher. I pride myself on the fact that I am a self-made man from a poor family. I am proud that the people have made me the President of the Court to defend the rights of the poor and oppressed. My father was a butcher who slaughtered sheep. I am a butcher of traitors." He later said, "In my capacity as President of the Court I call upon all Iraqis to thoroughly digest utterances of guidance we make from platform peoples court and which have become known as the Mahdawi comments. We make such comments to prompt citizens follow right path to attain objectives of great revolution....." It is believed that Mahdawi attempted thereby to negate Qasim's January 14, announcement against mob activities of the Popular Resistance Front and the Students Union. Egyptian press and radio attacks on Mahdawi late in January brought quick retort from him, "those who call for fake Arab nationalism, we call for true liberated Arab nationalism and we do not take orders from imperialism wherever it is. Some probably claim that they are Arabs when in the past they claimed they were Pharaonic." Referring to the Egyptian attacks at the opening of the Sa'id al-Qazzaz trial on January 24, 1959, Mahdawi asked the audience not to interrupt his remarks, which were entirely off-hand because "ovations of applause might interrupt my train of thought." Calling his attackers "Friends of Rountree" was too good for that use; "they are friends of dollars and slaves of dollar and Rountree." Later in the session Mahdawi referred to the Cairo Radio as "Voice of America No. 2" saying its fabrications and lies were symbols of bankruptcy of imperialism.

There is some indication that Mahdawi has now become somewhat less vitriolic since the recent inclusion of Prime Minister al-Qasim as a target of UAR attacks, and there is a possibility that al-Qasim will assume his own defense and might conceivably call for moderation by Mahdawi. However, clear information of this nature is not yet available.

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March 1959