

CIA

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SF Chronicle
Firm's Saudi
MAR 12 1975
Training Deal

Washington

Congressional investigators said yesterday that a contract under which a private U.S. firm is to train the Saudi Arabian National Guard does not threaten other countries and has advantages for the United States.

An 18-member subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee included this assessment of the \$103 million contract with the Vinnell Corp. of Alhambra Calif. in its report on tour of the Middle East February.

The contract in which the U.S. government served as an intermediary between Saudi Arabia and the Vinnell firm has been controversial since its existence was disclosed by the Associated Press.

The subcommittee concluded that the arrangement is not inconsistent with past practice in providing technical assistance and diplomatic relations with important oil-producing states.

The Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) "is separate from the regular Saudi Arabian army (and) has the distinctive mission of internal security such as guarding of pipelines against possible sabotage or terrorist attacks" the subcommittee said. It added "A review of the equipment the SANG is being trained to use shows that it will be limited to a defensive role."

The report also concluded that the danger of immediate war in the area is less than has been suggested in some published accounts but that there must be progress toward a peace settlement if war is to be averted.

It recommended that Israeli requests for additional U.S. military aid be studied carefully and judged item by item and that the United States consider providing economic and technical aid in rebuilding Egyptian cities along the Suez Canal.

The subcommittee which visited Israel, Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia concluded that Israel is now relatively stronger in military equipment with respect to its Arab neighbors than it was at the beginning of the 1973 war.

Associated Press