

SAUDIS WORRIED OVER NIXON ROLE

Officials Fear Impeachment Would Impair U.S. Efforts for Peace in Mideast

By JUAN de ONIS

Special to The New York Times

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, April 3.— Saudi Arabia, which has been confident that the United States will bring about a settlement in the Middle East, is now increasingly concerned that the peace effort might be weakened if President Nixon is impeached.

Saudi Arabian officials keep raising the question of impeachment with American visitors when they discuss the United States role, which they regard as the key to an Arab-Israeli settlement.

King Faisal's commitment to encouraging mediation of Secretary of State Kissinger has been clearly shown in Saudi Arabia's determined stand in favor of ending the Arab oil embargo against the United States.

When Sheik Ahmed Zaki al-Yamani, the minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources, is asked why Saudi Arabia took such a strong stand on ending the embargo, despite opposition from Syria and Libya, he replied: "Because the United States is possibly the only country that can bring Israel to a just peace settlement."

But undercurrents were apparent among other officials who wondered how weakened the Nixon Administration's political commitment to a Middle East peace would be by domestic political conflict in the United States over the Watergate affair.

Pessimism Called 'Realistic'

"I think the only realistic attitude is to be pessimistic," said Sheik Fahd al-Sudairi, Deputy Minister of Information, who follows the American press closely.

The same note was voiced by other Saudi officials, who expressed surprise that the Watergate investigation and other matters affecting Mr. Nixon's Presidency had "gone

so far" toward possible impeachment.

Despite such pessimism, there has been a pronounced improvement in United States-Saudi relations. Six months after the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war, which severely strained the ties between the two countries, United States diplomats and Saudi officials agree that "the old friendly feeling" is back.

James E. Akins, the United States Ambassador, has taken great pains to restore normal deliveries of American military equipment and advisory services for the Saudi armed forces, after delays during the latter part of last year.

The United States Embassy has promised full support for Saudi Arabia's efforts to convert the huge capital resources stemming from oil income into industrial and other development projects with American technology and management assistance.

Oil Output to Be Raised

In oil policy, this desert kingdom, the world's largest oil-exporting nation, is set on a course of raising productive capacity to the level of 11.5 million to 12 million barrels a day by early 1976.

This would represent an increase of about 30 per cent from the present production level of the Arabian American Oil Company, known as Aramco, which is 8.5 million barrels a day, and would strengthen Saudi Arabia's dominant position among Middle Eastern producers.

But an increasing share of this production is going to be marketed directly by the Saudi National Oil Company, which is preparing to raise its 25 per cent ownership of Aramco to a majority holding.

Negotiations on this takeover are under way with the American partners in Aramco—Exxon, Standard Oil of California, Texaco and Mobil—and the final formula is uncertain. Oil industry officials believe the outcome could be anything from a 75 per cent Government share to full Saudi ownership, with long-term sales contracts to the Aramco partners for oil exports.

Saudi oil officials are clearly convinced that they need the technical and management skills of the American partners for some time in operating the country's major industry, so an amicable solution seems certain.