

Yemeni Chief Sets Terms for Accepting U.S. Aid

By ERIC PACE

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SANA, Yemen, May 7—President Abdullah al-Salal of Yemen said today that he planned to ask for more American aid if the United States showed goodwill to his country and changed some of its policies.

The President said he had already forgiven American officials for engaging in what he called a plot to assassinate him and said that two American aid officials now under arrest in Taiz would be tried—for murder, sabotage and disturbing the peace—only after a thorough investigation.

A muscular man with small and lively hands, the President expressed considerable anti-American sentiment in an interview, the first to an American correspondent since he expelled the United States aid mission on charges of engaging in espionage and sabotage.

He has accused the mission and the two arrested officials of trying to blow up all of Taiz by firing a bazooka at an ammunition dump.

"Why are you so surprised" at the ouster of the aid mission, he inquired. "We do not want people who shoot me with a bazooka and take eight years to build a road and spend money for their own benefit."

"Forgive me for being so frank and excited," he exclaimed, gesturing from a gilded divan in his five-story palace.



United Press International
Abdullah al-Salal

He added: "I want to emphasize that we have great respect for the American people. We are a cultured people — we are not [King] Faisal [of Saudi Arabia] who killed 17 people without a trial. We are a civilized people, we have a charter and a law." Mr. Salal was referring to the execution in March of 17 accused saboteurs in Saudi Arabia.

Speaking through an interpreter, he said that if the United States showed goodwill by fulfilling several conditions, he

would ask for "any kind" of aid to redress the economic ills of his country.

"What can you do with a country like this, which has suffered badly from the Imam's rule," he interjected sorrowfully. Mr. al-Salal came to power four years ago by overthrowing the hereditary Imam, or king, of Yemen, Mohamad al-Badr.

But the President said he would only want aid if the United States promised to respect the "sovereignty and security of Yemen." Washington has denied any impropriety by United States officials here. Mr. al-Salal said he would insist that aid be given without "strings attached" and without re-establishing the aid mission. He said too much of aid expenditures—which were to have amounted to \$2.4-million this year—had been used to maintain the aid mission staff.

Mission Building Stoned

Members of the aid mission, here, approximately 60 in all, left hastily for Ethiopia last weekend after Yemeni crowds stoned and sacked the United States aid mission building in Taiz April 26. The aid program had been largely devoted to road construction, which President al-Salal criticized today as primitive and dilatory.

The President also demanded that the United States not intervene in neighboring South Arabia, now a British protectorate, which is expected to become independent early next year.

He said he would insist that Washington stop supporting King Faisal, who in turn backs Royalist Yemeni dissidents who seek to overthrow Mr. Al Salal.

The President gave no details about the assassination plot that he said the Americans had undertaken against him and declined to predict what sentence the arrested Americans, Stephen Liapis and Harold Hartman, would get if they were convicted.

If the United States did not have "good intentions for us," he said, "all right, may Allah bless you and we are not in need of anything."

No date for their trial has been set, but the Yemeni Interior Minister said yesterday that lawyers and reporters from all over the world would be invited to observe it.

The Yemeni Government contends that American aid officials are liable to prosecution under Yemeni security laws, but the United States maintains that they have diplomatic immunity under the terms of United States notes to the Yemeni Government in 1959.