Cairo Setback Seen
By ROBERT C. DOTYSpecial to The New York Times.
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CAIRO, Jan. 13—Neither Premier Gamal Abdel Nasser nor any other responsible Government official would comment for publication today prior to receipt of full details of the Baghdad agreement between Iraq and Turkey.

There appeared, however, to be fear here that Egypt had suffered a severe diplomatic setback that might well cost her leadership of the Arab world. For the last four years since Britain, France, Turkey and the United States proposed the formation of a Middle East defense organization Cairo has successfully restrained her Arab League partners from joining any defensive arrangements involving powers outside the Middle East.

With the signing in October of the British-Egyptian agreement ending the British occupation of the Suez Canal zone, Egypt's principal argument against collaboration with the West for defense vanished.

It was generally believed that the ruling military junta was moving gradually toward a policy of cooperation. The effect of the Iraqi action was to steal the initiative from Cairo. If Turkey, already allied with the Western powers in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and with Pakistan, Iraq and Yugoslavia, succeeds in concluding similar bilateral pacts with Syria, Lebanon and Libya, Egypt will have either to join the procession as a late and therefore junior partner or face the real threat of isolation.

Possible Effect of Action

The effect of the Iraqi action may be to strengthen the faction within the Government that favors a policy of cooperation with the efforts to form an Asian-African grouping uncommitted either to the East or the West as advocated by Premier Jawaharlal Nehru of India.

It was foreseen that Egypt would find it difficult to present the Iraqi action to the rest of the Arab world as a defection from Arab League principles. By the terms of the British-Egyptian agreement Egypt herself undertook to readmit the British, and presumably other Western forces, to the Suez Canal zone base to help repulse an attack on any Arab state or Turkey.

Iraq has done no more, except to make the arrangement a reciprocal one whereby she receives as well as gives aid in an emergency.

A Foreign Office official anticipated that this would be one of the main points in the Iraqi defense of its action when it comes up for discussion in the Arab League. He foresaw also that Iraq would point out that she had refrained from the conclusion of any pact until Egypt had reached a satisfactory solution of her dispute with Britain on the canal zone.

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