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CAIRO, Jan. 17—Egypt today assigned one of her best diplomats as Ambassador to Syria, apparently with the task of keeping Damascus solidly in the Arab League and out of the projected defensive alliance planned by Iraq and Turkey.

The new envoy is Brig. Mahmoud Riad, long director of Palestine Affairs of the Egyptian Army and recently chief of Arab Affairs in the Foreign Affairs Ministry. He was a senior member of the Egyptian delegation at the last United Nations General Assembly session.

He will be chargé d'affaires pending acceptance of his credentials by Syria, it was announced.

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