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*Called
13 DEC 1973*

TO: DIRECTOR COLBY *From Amb Helms*

FROM: AMBASSADOR HELMS

SUBJECT: GOI Interest in A-11/SR-71

1. The Shah has twice discussed with MG Brett his interest in acquiring high altitude reconnaissance aircraft. The first discussion centered on the A-11 with the SR-71 being brought up in the second discussion on 10 December. While we may have successfully turned aside the question of transferring the equipment, the Shah is still intent on receiving intelligence take equivalent to the reconnaissance product.
2. To summarize the background, on November 8, Shah told Brett he wanted to acquire sophisticated high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft. In this meeting it was initially difficult for Brett to determine exactly what type aircraft the Shah was referring to, but after some discussion it became apparent it was the A-11. Brett raised this question during his late November consultations with senior officials in DOD who voiced the anticipated reservations. We understand a technical paper is currently being prepared in DOD.
3. When Brett returned to Iran and informed the Shah on December 10 of his talks in Washington, the General brought up the A-11/SR-71 question. Mentioning his discussion of the subject with Secretary Schlesinger and the ongoing technical study, Brett said he felt sale of aircraft would create serious

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problems for the USG, particularly as A-11/SR-71 was clearly identified with US intelligence collection. He thought decision would have to be referred to highest levels of USG. Shah responded that he recognized acquisition of A-11/SR-71 type aircraft would create political problems and made the connection with the Powers U-2 incident. Shah said his objective was really not the acquisition of hardware but the need for the type of intelligence acquired through reconnaissance. He needed timely and accurate photography, specifically on Iraq. In the future, he inferred, same data would be required for Afghanistan. Brett said he would so report.

4. In a subsequent conversation on this subject with SCS Commander, Gen. Azhari, Brett got the same message on Iran's intelligence needs. Azhari noted he had told Senator Goldwater that Iran gave the US much more than it received. The Senator replied that was because of Iran's location. Azhari told Brett that we should work to achieve a greater balance in US-Iranian intelligence exchange. Azhari is not the type to take an initiative on a matter like this without strong and specific guidance from above. His remarks tie in with the recent requests from SCS J-2 MG Moghadam for augmented intelligence training and exchange.

5. We have reached the point where we need Washington decisions ^{and guidance} ~~and guidance~~. Plainly, we do not want to go the hardware

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transfer route if that presumably side-tracked issue should reappear. Apart from the horrendous political problems, acquisition of that kind of sophisticated hardware by the hard-pressed IIAF could be a major military problem, to say nothing of what it might do to the health of Brett and his successors.

6. The Shah's interest in the ^{general} reconnaissance product, however, is clearly serious and if past experience is any guide, it will not be turned off. He wants coverage of all his neighbors. Would you please be good enough to examine in any context or any forum you choose (including keeping the whole matter inside the Agency) how intelligence data, particularly in the military field, ^{may be continued for passage} ~~can be passed~~ to the Shah and a few ^{identifiable} ~~specific~~ subordinates. As you well know, the Agency has had experience in using this device, [redacted] [redacted] and I feel that under the circumstances we ~~can~~ do better by the Shah than we have been. I am almost certain that Secretary Kissinger would have no objection to the passing of such military information, and I am willing to go bail for his endorsement.

7. After you have examined this matter, I would appreciate hearing from you on where you come out. Incidentally, I would ~~not~~ worry too much about the Soviet Union. It is Iraq and Afghanistan which basically interest the Shah.

Drafted by Preschet
Checked with MG Brett

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