

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

21 July 1988

NOTE FOR: DDCI

SUBJECT: Iran, Hostages, and the Elections

One more topic deserving your attention before taking leave.

You'll recall I mentioned to you a few weeks ago a paper NIO/CT wanted to do on this subject. Attached is the result. It is largely inference and speculation but sensible . . . and as far as we can go on an important "what if" topic.

If you approve, we shall send it to a very restricted list of recipients in the CT community.

[Handwritten Signature]
Fritz W. Ermarth

Attachment:
As stated

CONCUR:

[Handwritten Signature]

Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

7-22-88
Date

copy to DCI

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~~SECRET~~



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Prospects for a Hostage Gambit,
By Tehran This US Election Year¹

Will Iran take advantage of the US election this year to try to stimulate the US Government or the presidential candidates to modify the standing US no-concession policy toward the captors of the US hostages in Lebanon? Iran has tried to exploit certain previous Western elections. There are recent indications that Iran may be trying to reduce its isolation from the West.

[Redacted]

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While hard evidence is thin, these factors suggest that an effort by Iran to benefit from the hostages is more likely in the next few months than in the past.

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Such an effort would probably entail a number of Iranian ploys and probes to see if US officials -- or the presidential candidates -- have become more interested, or more flexible, during the election period. Iran's options range from obvious actions intended to engage the attention of the US electorate, to discreet and subtle dialogues between unofficial government intermediaries. The signals from Tehran [Redacted] would probably be ambiguous and inconsistent.

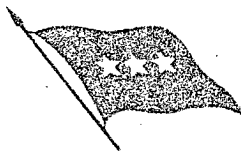
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[Redacted]

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1. This memorandum conveys the views of the National Intelligence Officer for Counterterrorism. Although the content has been discussed extensively with Intelligence Community analysts, it has not been formally coordinated. There is little evidence bearing on what the Iranians may be planning in regard to the US hostages; therefore, except where evidence is cited, this memorandum should be treated as informed speculation.

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TO: Fritz Erwanth

This MFR is far from a complete report of Akhromeev's remarks, but I believe they capture the key points which offer some insight into his line.

20 JUL 1988

Bin Otk

Here are Odlov's notes on Akhromeev at the CEM.

Please circulate as appropriate "OUO"

[Handwritten signature]

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15 July 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Points made by Marshal Akhromeyev at the Council
on Foreign Relations, 11 July 1988

1. In his lecture, he set forth four points that guide Soviet military policy:

a. Who is the likely adversary?

b. What kinds of forces and operational capabilities does the adversary have?

c. What kinds of forces should the USSR have to oppose them?

d. What kinds of training are necessary for these kinds of forces?

He spoke at length about each one, citing the US, NATO, and the ring of forward bases which the US and its allies have built around the USSR. This view of encirclement was repeated several times, especially in the question period.

Questions and answers (only the answers are provided).

2. The Soviet military budget includes only pay, maintenance, and material support for training. All R&D and procurement are paid for by other ministries. The USSR plans to change this, making the MOD budget more analogous to the US defense budget. Apparently he means that the MOD will be put on something like khozrchet for R&D and procurement. The point was unclear, not elaborated.

3. The new military doctrine has been discussed for two years in the Defense Council. The political-social aspect of it is fully developed and directives issued. The military-technical aspect will require a long time to work out.

4. The Defense Council includes military (plural) and civilians. While the military prepares most of the papers and proposed directives, it is wholly subordinate in the decision process.

5. The "military potential" of NATO is much greater than that of the Warsaw Pact. "You have 800 million people. The Warsaw Pact has only 300 million." The US audience did not understand what he meant by military potential. Several times he referred to the "correlation of forces" and "military potential" only to have the respondents ask questions that indicated they were on different wave lengths. Global basing is a large factor in Akhromeyev's assessment of our "military potential." Most of his proposals for arms control, including the acceptance of the idea of asymmetrical reductions in Europe, were aimed at reducing our forward basing.

6. Air power, particularly in Europe, is a big worry. It can attack 1,000 kilometers in depth in a few hours. Tanks cannot even reach the line of departure in that amount of time. Again, this seems to fit his tactic of pressing for a reduction of US forward basing.

7. Several times he asserted that 1985, when Gorbachev came to power, was the beginning of a new era in the USSR, not a tactical shift but a fundamental break. This was his answer to the question of whether or not the Brezhnev doctrine is still in effect.

8. On Nicaragua and Ethiopia, when asked if the Soviet policy toward insurgencies is changing, he insisted that the USSR is supporting government there, not insurgents.

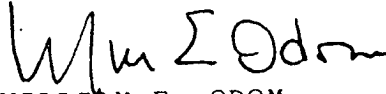
9. He admitted that deeds, not just words, are important to prove to us that their doctrine is changing. For example, this year, a CPX involved 20 days of defense. If the political leadership could not bring the war to a halt in that period, a long time, in his view, then a "counter offensive" would be appropriate. He cited Pearl Harbor and the US counter offensive thereafter as an example that would parallel Soviet concepts of the change in their offensive doctrine. In the counter offensive, war would, of course, be "unlimited." He did not specify whether nuclear weapons were included.

10. When asked about getting rid of all nuclear weapons, he favored the idea, but gradually. Total removal in a short period makes no sense.

11. Deterrence is an immoral doctrine. Nuclear weapons can have no political utility. It is in humankind's interest to prevent nuclear war, and deterrence is at odds with this interest.

12. Are Soviet nuclear weapons under adequate control to prevent accidental launch? Yes, equal to or better than the control he saw at a Minute Man II silo. But he is still worried about the tiny possibility of an accident on both sides.

Col-General Chervov was also present. When I asked him about the Soviet press emphasis on a shift from "quantity to quality" in Soviet weapons and forces, he answered that "You are a careful reader of our press. That is a very important change." I followed by asking if that meant a cut in the overall force structure size, even if there is not conventional arms agreement. He replied without hesitation, "Yes."



WILLIAM E. ODOM
Lieutenant General, USA