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Who Found Iran?

by Lanslow Anthrax

FROM ALL APPEARANCES, 1979 was not starting off at all well. This was the year we lost Iran. After the good cheer of the Christmas season had worn off and the Shah made off for his long overdue "vacation," the serious work of figuring out who lost Iran began in earnest. Conservatives and liberals alike blamed the President, who never really figured out it wasn't his problem in the first place. The President immediately rose to the occasion and got steamed at Admiral Turner and the CIA. That's where all the trouble began.

It used to be that the President could take the blame for losing this or that when "the buck stops here" was the word of the day. It turns out that President Truman, who invented that sign for his desk, also invented the CIA. Although Truman didn't recognize it at the time, he had created the perfect patsy. Three decades, six presidents and one Daniel Schorr later, the White House discovered it could blame anything on the CIA with the full support of the American people. Iran was a piece of cake.

Over at the CIA, 1978 had been a really lousy year for losing things and 1979 didn't promise to be much better. That year started off on the wrong foot when they lost the owner's manual to their very best satellite, and things were really going down hill fast. The satellite's manufacturer told Admiral Turner that without the manual, it wasn't going to honor the satellite's 10 year or 1,000,000,000 mile warranty. With the warranty lost, Admiral Turner was faced with the prospect of sending his own repair crew into outer space to fix the thing if it broke down—not a cheap enterprise these days of double-digit inflation.

Up on the Hill, Admiral Turner had lost a good part of his budget, and really couldn't afford a repair crew or a new satellite. Turner really put his foot down after that. Searches were ordered of all people leaving the CIA building to make sure nothing else was lost. For a while it looked like things might now be working right. An alert CIA guard caught an electrician trying to sneak Chad out of the Langley headquarters in his lunch pail. When Taiwan was lost a week later, the White House unexpectedly took full blame for it. That one sure was a relief for Admiral Turner.

Then came Iran. It was like a bad headache that wouldn't go away. The Shah had promised President Nixon to defend the Peacock Throne forever, and no foreign autocrat worth his weapons ever broke a promise to President Nixon. The Shah certainly kept his part of the bargain, buying enough weapons to look like Georgia and California combined. He built up a big army and a first rate secret police. If Iran was going down the tubes it must be our fault. The American people were never going to buy some crazy story about the mighty Shah being brought down by an aged, bearded revolutionary sitting in some Paris bistro four thousand miles away. The President could no more sell that line than a story his brother Billy was entering a rabbinical seminary.

The President had no other choice. If Iran was gone, it must be the CIA. Admiral Turner was ready for this one, taking the blame squarely in the best Navy tradition. He beat his breast with three quick *mea culpas* and set off to remedy the situation. An immediate top-down, bottom-up reorganization of the intelligence community was ordered and a new deputy in charge of not-losing-anything-else was appointed with a distinguished Harvard background. An aide was sent down to the operations directorate to see if there was somebody left there to fire.

As it turned out, the last 500 spies had all gone down to the personnel office to turn in their papers for early retirement. A compromise was reached in which Turner submitted his own retirement papers from the Navy, and nobody else was fired over Iran.

Just as things looked like they were going from bad to worse, and gas would break the two-dollar a gallon mark by election time, it happened. Cleaning up around the National Security Council offices late one night, Mervin Ferbish

found Iran. It wasn't that the old Georgian janitor was looking for it at all. Ferbish had spent most of his career sweeping the peanut warehouse for Jimmy and really thought Iran was a metal that tractors were made out of.

But, as fate would have it, he was just stacking up some old Top Secret papers from Chester Arthur's administration and there it was—a little greasy from not having its oil drained off in three months—but still Iran. Needless to say the President was delighted. Ferbish has gotten his reward, and just been appointed head of the General Services Administration. Alas, there is still Admiral Turner. Well, two out of three isn't bad. ■ ■ ■

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