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Finding Pursuant to Section 662 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Concerning Operations in Foreign Countries Other Than Those Intended Solely for the Purpose of Intelligence Collection

I find the following operation in a foreign country is important to the national security of the United States and direct the Director of Central Intelligence, or his designee, to report this Finding to the concerned committees of the Congress pursuant to Section 662, and to provide such briefings as necessary.

SCOPE

Iran

DESCRIPTION

Using any and all possible means, effect the rescue and safe departure from Iran of persons held hostage in the United States Embassy in Tehran and United States persons and their dependents held against their will in Iran or otherwise unable freely to depart from the country.



The White House

Date: January 23, 1980

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Derivative C1 by DCI 705953

Review on Jan 2000

Derived from D9d.5 & D9c.3

TS-800011

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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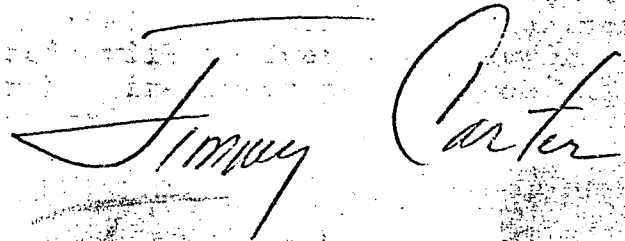
January 23, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

I have today signed a Finding pursuant to Section 662 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, covering operations to effect the rescue of persons held hostage in the United States Embassy in Tehran and other United States persons and their dependents who are held against their will in Iran or who are otherwise unable freely to depart from that country.

I hereby instruct you, and determine that such instruction is consistent with the timely notification provision of the law, to give notice to the Congress of this Finding or of any operation pursuant to this Finding only at such time as, in your judgment, such notice can be given without undue risk of loss of life should an inadvertent disclosure occur. You may determine, in accordance with this instruction, that notice should be given only after such operation is commenced or completed.


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Political Consequences of a Hostage Rescue Operation in Iran

1. There are three possible results of a hostage rescue operation in Iran:

a. Total success: The Hostages are freed; the armada returns unscathed.

b. Total failure: The armada fails to achieve its mission, and suffers significant losses; the hostages remain in Tehran under the militants' control.

c. A mixed result, with major casualties to both sides: The U.S. force reaches the Embassy; shoots and kills a substantial number of militants; perhaps rescues a few hostages; but many hostages are killed before they can be rescued.

In all of the above cases, it is likely that a substantial number of Iranians will be killed, given the targeting of the helicopter gunships, etc.

2. These possibilities could lead to different results, as described below. However, in all cases American military aircraft would overfly Iran and inflict casualties on Iranian civilians, some of them probably innocent bystanders. We cannot assume that Iranians, other perhaps than fanatic supporters of the ancien regime, will be able to reconcile themselves to our behavior. In short, we can expect a wave of anti-Americanism to engulf the country. Even the moderates--

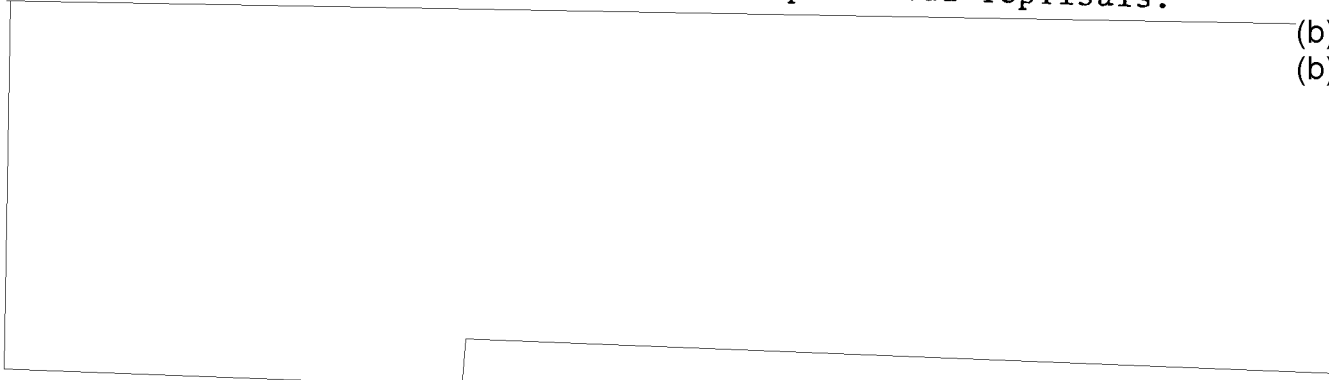
[redacted] or whomever one places in this category-- will condemn us for this action; for most Iranians who regard

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the holding of the Embassy hostages as ~~an~~ ^{a severe} provocation will feel that we should have waited for history to take its course. ~~Those~~, Those who, on the other hand, feel that we have endured enough humiliation would be likely to conceal their sympathy for us because of the fear of political reprisals.



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If the operation was a success, the militants and Khomeini could suffer serious consequences. The raison d'etre for the militants would evaporate. They and their allies, possibly including Khomeini, might well be viewed as having invited defeat and humiliation by their intractability on the hostage issue. Doubtless the various political elements in Iran would be busy attempting to place the blame for the debacle on their adversaries. In brief, a successful operation could lead to a political vacuum (with the diminished influence of Khomeini), and to serious, possibly violent political infighting. Ethnic groups could attempt to take advantage of this situation to press for greater autonomy. The left would certainly attempt to exploit anti-Americanism to gain greater influence.

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5. Total failure, on the other hand, would represent a victory for Khomeini, the militants, and the radical elements of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, and, what is equally important, a defeat for the U.S. Iranians in country would be reluctant to oppose the regime.

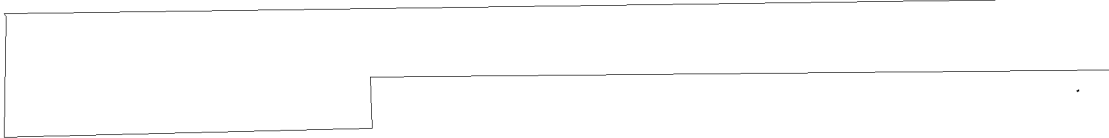
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6. There is also the possibility of a mixed result, partial failure, partial success. The probability is that this result would convey to Iranians a sense that the U.S. had attempted, but not completed, its mission. There would be an apprehension of another rescue attempt, or some sort of follow-up operation. Government propaganda would probably play up the successful aspects of the Iranian defense and glorify fallen heroes as martyrs. This could place the country on a war footing, go far to unify opposing factions,



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