

22 January 1980

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Forces Occupying the US Embassy in Tehran

## Key Judgments

*We believe that the group occupying the US Embassy compound in Tehran numbers between 150 and 300. They are armed, apparently well organized, and have indicated continuing concern with security procedures--not only against a possible US or US-instigated attack, but against a possible attack by an unruly mob which would take matters into its own hands.* [redacted]

(b)(3)

*While the captors have shown significant independence of Khomeini, there are indications that they are ultimately responsive to his direction. If Khomeini issued an unambiguous order that the hostages be released, we believe his order would be obeyed.* [redacted]

(b)(3)

*Apparently well disciplined, the members of the group have been capable of maintaining clandestinity so that despite considerable media exposure, little information on the background of the group or the identities of its members has emerged.* [redacted]

(b)(3)

*Spokesmen for the captors have successfully manipulated the media with effective propaganda efforts exploiting Iranian nationalist feelings and Moslem religious emotion to whip up anti-American sentiment.* [redacted]

(b)(3)

## Relationship with Khomeini and the Revolutionary Council

The forces occupying the US Embassy in Tehran have repeatedly proclaimed their loyalty to Ayatollah Khomeini and identify themselves as the "Moslem Student Followers of the Imam's Line." Numbering between 150 and 300, the group is apparently well organized and tightly disciplined.

*This memorandum was prepared jointly by the Iran Task Force and the Near East South Asia Division of the Directorate of Operations. It has been coordinated with the National Intelligence Officer for Near East South Asia. Comments and queries may be addressed* [redacted]

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(b)(3)

Statements issued by the group reveal a skillful manipulation of the media in a propaganda effort designed to gather public support for the occupation. These statements suggest that the ideology of the captors mixes leftist radicalism with elements closer to Khomeini's views--a hatred for the US and the Shah, as well as devotion to Islam. [REDACTED]

(b)(3)

The group is evidently responsive to direction from Khomeini, and we believe that if the Ayatollah ordered the release of the hostages he would be obeyed. There are indications that the captors are "out ahead" of Khomeini--that they initiated the occupation without his specific direction and that popular support for their hardline position would make it difficult for Khomeini to move against them even if he wished to do so. Nevertheless, the captors are likely to follow Khomeini's direction on possible trials of the hostages and on the question of their release. [REDACTED]

(b)(3)

Khomeini has supported the continued occupation of the Embassy, calling the action an expression of the will of the Iranian people. Nevertheless, the relationship of Khomeini to the captors is characterized by both control and conflict. Khomeini's order that American clergy be allowed to visit the hostages at Christmas apparently went against the will of the captors. Likewise, the captors' refused to allow an American reporter into the Embassy compound after Khomeini had approved the meeting. [REDACTED]

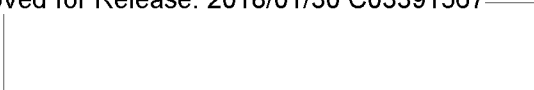
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Spokesmen for the group have rejected the authority of the Revolutionary Council, since they fear that the Council might achieve a peaceful resolution of the crisis which would deprive them of the political influence they have acquired by holding the Embassy. [REDACTED]

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The experience of the groups of young armed guerrillas who bore the brunt of the street fighting during the final days of the revolution, but were then shunted aside by the Revolutionary Council and the Bazargan government, and were in fact driven forcibly from the headquarters buildings they



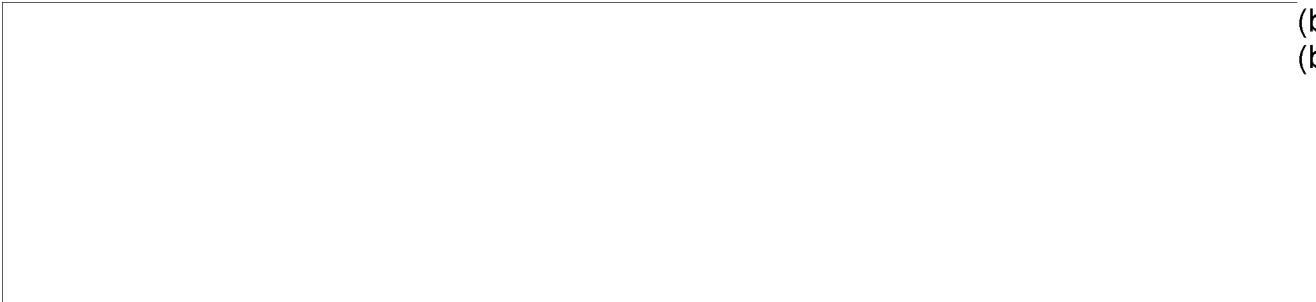
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had seized, may well have provided the captors with an object lesson in dealing with the institutions of Khomeini's Islamic Republic. Without convincing guarantees of a role in the political process, and in the absence of an unambiguous order from Khomeini to release the hostages, the captors are unlikely to cooperate in any fashion with efforts by members of the Revolutionary Council to achieve a resolution of the crisis short of the Shah's return to Iran for "trial."



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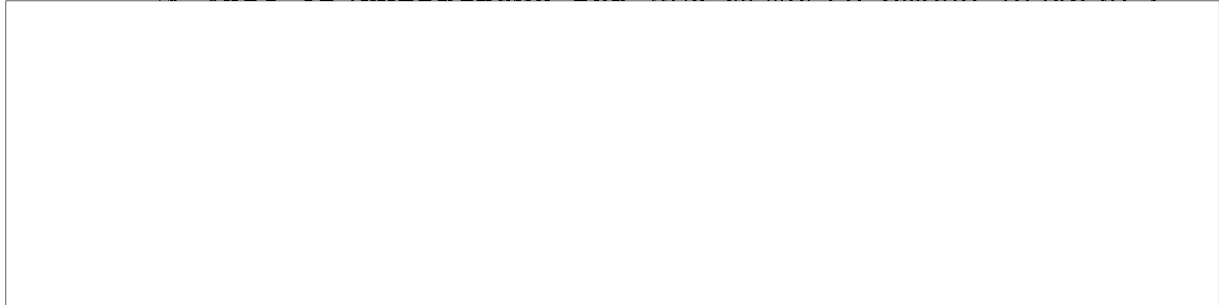
Identity and Composition of the Group



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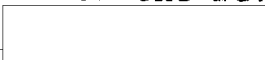
We believe that the organizational element of the group is provided by Islamic militants probably associated with one of the Islamic/leftist organizations active on Iranian university campuses under the Shah and now openly competing with other leftist organizations for new members among students



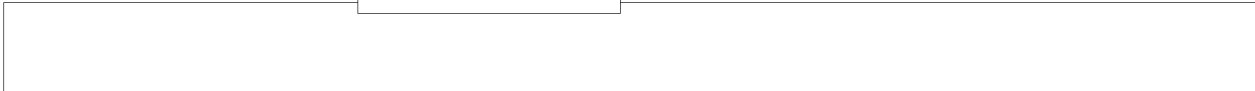
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Statements issued by the captors and various reports on the group indicate no expressions of ideology beyond a dedication to Islam, a determination to continue to momentum of the revolution, and hatred of the Shah and the US.



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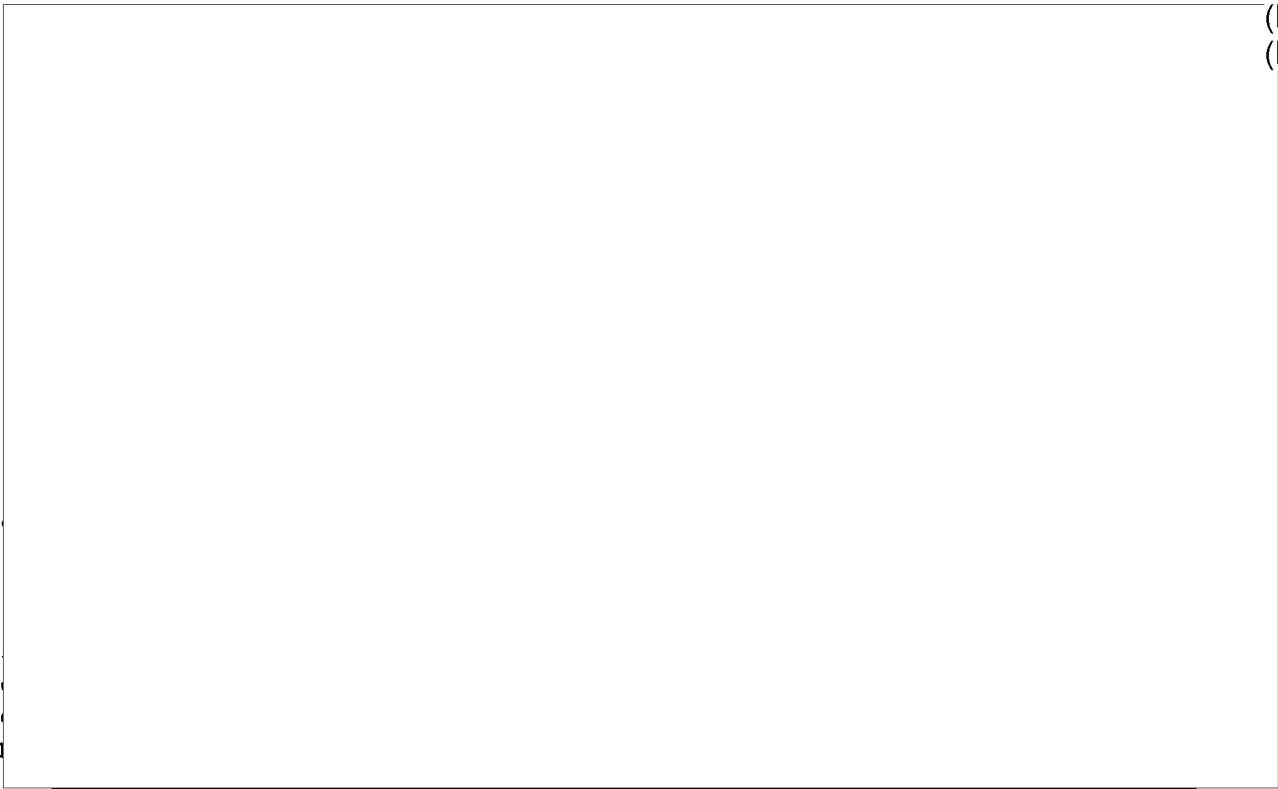
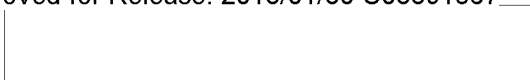
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it is possible that some members of the group occupying the Embassy may have received some training from Palestinian groups in the past. Some of the captors reportedly speak Farsi in a manner suggesting that they have spent periods of time in the Arab world, or that they have had extended close contacts with Arabic speakers



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[Redacted]

[Redacted] the main force involved in the initial occupation was composed of fanatic Moslem students under the control of Avatollah Mousavi Khoeni. [Redacted] Khoeni was the leader of a group identified as the Islamic Association, and having long supported Khomeini has recently been appointed to supervise the upcoming presidential elections. The captors having taken the name "Followers of the Imam's Line" supports the view that Khoeni's, and thus Khomeini's, followers are dominant within the compound, though their position is apparently not unchallenged. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] members of the established leftist guerrilla groups, the People's Fedayeen and the Mujahedin, are not among the captors and that they are in fact resentful of having been unable to play a role in the Embassy occupation. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Identity of Individuals Among the Group: Summary Selected Data

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Reports Concerning Organization of the Captors

There is no doubt that there is a disagreement among the captors on at least minor points, but an organizational discipline has emerged--or been imposed. The released hostages report discussion of resolution of specific problems, but immediate acceptance of decisions coming from above. In some individual cases, disillusion with the wisdom of having undertaken the occupation has been reported, but no reports of effective dissent have been received [Redacted]

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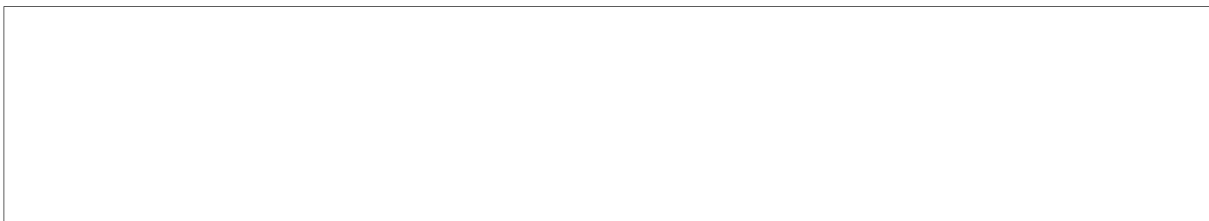
Structurally, the occupation forces are apparently led by a committee. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] the five-man committee is composed of Khoeni, two religious students and two Pasdaran. [Redacted]

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