

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

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SPECIAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

November 8, 1979

Time and Place: 8:30-10:30 a.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Iran

Participants:

State
Secretary Cyrus Vance
Warren Christopher

CIA
Admiral Stansfield Turner
Frank Carlucci

Defense
Secretary Harold Brown
W. Graham Clayton, Jr.

White House
Zbigniew Brzezinski
Hamilton Jordan
Lloyd Cutler

JCS
General David Jones
General John Pustay
(Col. King, JCS, was the
briefer on military options)

NSC
Colonel William Odom
Gary Sick

Energy
Secretary Charles Duncan

(NOTE: Not all of these individuals were present for the entire meeting. The discussion of military options was restricted to those directly involved, i.e. State, Defense, JCS, CIA and NSC.)

Justice
Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Dr. Brzezinski summarized the areas which the President wishes to pursue: reconnaissance flights over the F-14 air bases (U-2 or SR-71); diversion of the Midway toward the Persian Gulf; prohibition of any Iranian student demonstrations on Federal property; a legal brief for the President on modalities for expulsion of Iranian students; a stronger statement than heretofore regarding the safety of the American citizens, our expectation that others will protest these actions by Iran, and assertion of our right to act in legitimate self-defense under international law in the event they are harmed; and an approach to the United Nations. (TS)

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Classified and Extended by Zbigniew Brzezinski
Review November 8, 1999
Reason for Extension: NSC 1.13 (f)

DECLASSIFIED

per 8/16/07 CIA 14r.
OLC-07-237
BIB NARA DATE 7/30/08
AND PER 8/24/10 NSS E-MAN

1. Iranian Students. It was agreed that no demonstrations would be permitted on Federal property. Some properties, e.g. national parks, require no permit for public gatherings. Justice will review the regulations. Summary expulsion is prohibited by due process. However, Justice will examine possible legislation to expedite handling of such cases. Justice will prepare an examination of steps available to the President. (C)

2. Clark Mission/PLO. Ramsey Clark has been in touch with an Islamic figure in Tehran who may accompany the PLO delegation to Qom. Clark believes that he may be able to work something out and requested that we forego any official approach to the UN for the moment. The SCC agreed that we would limit our activities today to the consultations in New York being undertaken by Ambassador McHenry. The Clark mission will remain in Istanbul for the time being. Clark is authorized to undertake contacts with the PLO and will serve as the principal channel for any such contacts. (S)

3. Statement. It was agreed that a draft statement by Vance would be used today, primarily to reassure the public. It will indicate that the U.S. Government recognizes its obligation to protect innocent American citizens and will do all it can to fulfill that responsibility. (U)

4. The Shah. We have had signals from high level Iranians that the Shah should at least be removed from the United States as a gesture. There are indications that the Shah may in fact wish to leave. However, his doctors have thus far advised against moving him. David Newsom is in New York to talk to those close to the Shah to see what his position is. All agreed that flying him out when he is in very bad condition would be a mistake. Dr. Brzezinski observed that sending the Shah away in response to coercion would be an act of acquiescence to blackmail unprecedented in American history. (S)

5. Economic. Secretary Vance presented a paper on possible economic countermeasures. Other studies are also under way. (S)

6. Military Contingencies. Further study has been given to the rescue option. The JCS does not believe it is viable. There would be a very high risk of failure, even with very good intelligence on the location of the hostages and other operational detail. (TS)

A number of punitive options have been examined in more detail. An attack on the refinery at Abadan would potentially destroy a large proportion of domestic fuel stocks and reduce refinery capacity for kerosene, heating oil and gasoline by more than

half. There are three specific targets: the power plant, the refinery and the catalytic converter. The power plant could be repaired relatively quickly, although it would be very disruptive. The refinery would take about six months to replace, and the catalytic converter would take several years. The operation could be conducted by carrier-based aircraft from the Midway (4-5 days away), a Seal team to be put ashore (could be organized in 2-3 days), or by an AC-130 gunship (3-4 days lead time). On balance, Defense and JCS favor the gunship since it is extremely accurate, very effective, and involves no likely problem of extracting personnel. Air defenses in the area are extremely light. The AC-130 could make an attack from Diego Garcia with refueling. Use of Diego Garcia would require coordination with the British. Defense will examine further the possibility of such an attack without coordination with any other nation. (TS)

Three Iranian harbors could be mined to close off 65 percent of Iran's imports without affecting the oil export facilities. The most appropriate mines would be active for a minimum of 58 days. (TS)

An attack on the F-14s could not expect to get more than about half the Iranian inventory. Defense believes it would be an error to strike at the Iranian military, since they may be helpful later. Also, a disruptive attack on the military might tempt the Soviets to move in. Defense will examine the best means of conducting reconnaissance flights of F-14 bases and provide a recommendation tomorrow. (TS)

7. Midway. Although the members of the SCC favored diversion of the carrier, a careful weighing of the pros and cons persuaded them that it would be inadvisable. Cancellation of the port call which is scheduled to begin tonight would immediately become known and would be played by the press in an inflammatory way tomorrow. This could disrupt the various efforts that are under way on the diplomatic front and even endanger the hostages. We gain very little. The Midway can break off its port call at any time and be 4-5 days away from the Persian Gulf. Since our scenarios call primarily for use of the Midway in a punitive operation, rather than the rescue effort, gaining a day or two does not seem worth the risk. On balance, the SCC recommended proceeding with the visit, keeping the task force on call if the situation takes a turn for the worse. (TS)

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