

Iran - Ghotbzadeh-Cottam

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TO: (Agency)	DELIVER TO:	Extension	Room No.
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BY

NARS, DATE

2/27/95

Memorandum of Conversation

Participants: Henry Pfecht, IWG
Richard Cottam, University of Pittsburgh

Subject: Cottam/Ghotbzadeh Conversation

Cottam reached Ghotbzadeh early this morning after considerable difficulty. The conversation was hard to follow as Ghotbzadeh insisted on speaking in "code."

Ghotbzadeh insisted that it was possible to reach a settlement before the Iranian presidential elections. In fact, he thinks a settlement would assure him of victory. He believes he has Khomeini's backing in reaching a settlement. In the past, "85 different people" in Qom were telling Khomeini how to handle the crisis. Now he (Ghotbzadeh) is "in control." Cottam interprets this to mean that Khomeini nods affirmatively when Ghotbzadeh puts an idea to him.

Ghotbzadeh's principal point was that he had great confidence in Waldheim and was anxious that we allow Waldheim to set the pace for a settlement. Our pressure for sanctions was making it very hard for Ghotbzadeh to maneuver. We should listen to Waldheim, the Iranians were taking their lead from him. Cottam said he had the impression that Waldheim was developing proposals which included a delay on the vote on sanctions but we were not listening to Waldheim and the effect was to restrict Ghotbzadeh's freedom of maneuver. Ghotbzadeh said he had complete confidence in Farhang who spoke for him.

A second principal point was Ghotbzadeh's emphasis on extradition from Panama. Cottam said he questioned him sharply asking him whether extradition was a realistic consideration or just something in Ghotbzadeh's mind. Ghotbzadeh replied that he was very confident of what he was saying because he had spoken directly to Panamanian leaders. Nevertheless it was not clear to Cottam whether Ghotbzadeh was talking about extradition or an extradition trial. Ghotbzadeh made two comments to Cottam on Panama. First, all the Americans have to do "is to give Panama the green light and they will go ahead as planned." Second, perhaps the U.S. should send "the same man" down there to discuss the crisis with Panama. There was no indication who this might be.

I asked Cottam whether the Panama track seemed an essential part of Ghotbzadeh's plan. He said it clearly was but it did not seem to be linked in timing or substance to the UN activity. There plainly had to be some movement in Panama, possibly for an extradition trial, for Ghotbzadeh to succeed.

Cottam asked Ghotbzadeh about the linkage between Afghanistan and the hostages and whether an argument could be made to Khomeini that once the hostage issue was over, Iran could assume a world role in opposing the Soviets. Ghotbzadeh said Afghanistan was still important to him and others on the Revolutionary Council but it was not an effective argument with Khomeini. Ghotbzadeh had gotten into some trouble within the "party" because of his strong statement on Afghanistan.

In closing, Ghotbzadeh reemphasized that he was very positive on Waldheim who he thought was handling the crisis well. It could be ended in ten days if we relaxed on sanctions.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 6, 1980

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Cottam/Ghotbzadeh Conversation:

Cottam spoke to Ghotbzadeh at 8:15 E.S.T. today and found him exhilarated. He was in the best mood that Cottam has known. He said the transfer of the hostages to the control of the Revolutionary Council was a very significant step.

Cottam asked him how the United States should react. Ghotbzadeh said it would be better if we treated the news in a "non-joyous fashion." If we had to say something, we could say that the transfer was an aspect of Iran's internal affairs. Ghotbzadeh added that he thought it would be helpful if we leaked to the press that the transfer was a victory for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said it was important to build him up to help him accomplish the next steps. Cottam asked him what the next steps might be. Ghotbzadeh would only say that something was definitely planned.

Cottam asked whether the Imam had been involved, and Ghotbzadeh replied that of course he had been involved.

Ghotbzadeh added a comment that Cottam did not understand. He said, "I will be seeing your friend over here in a few days. Should I tell him that you called?" Cottam replied, "Sure," without having the slightest idea to whom Ghotbzadeh was referring. He thought it might be Hamilton Jordan.

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PER 11/1/85 State FILE MR-NLC-95-05
BY [Signature] NARS, DATE 2/27/95

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION
(IRAN WORKING GROUP)

DATE: March 11, 1980

TIME: Early Morning

PARTICIPANTS: Sadegh GHOTBZADEH, Iranian Foreign Minister
Richard Cottam

On March 10 I asked Cottam to telephone Ghotbzadeh to make the following points:

-- The most recent Khomeini statement had been viewed with great seriousness in Washington. On the morning of March 10 there had been a meeting of the senior levels of Government to consider whether we should continue to pursue the negotiating track utilizing the UN Commission. The mood was very pessimistic.

-- In the afternoon there had been a meeting with the senior leadership of the Congress and further discussions in the Executive Branch.

-- At the end of the day the decision was reached to continue to pursue negotiations and to attempt to keep the UN Commission in being. There was general recognition of the serious political problem the Iranians face prior to the March 14 elections.

-- We were attempting to persuade the UN to handle its press statement in a way that would preserve options for the Commission. This would be our posture with the press as well. We hoped that the Iranians would not make any statements that would complicate efforts to keep the Commission going.

Ghotbzadeh was pleased with this message and said he shared that point of view. He said he would follow the same line in Iran.

Ghotbzadeh said Khomeini had "blundered" with his most recent statement. He tried to please both the religious hardliners and the Revolutionary Council. Khomeini's statement had not been an attack on Ghotbzadeh. In fact Ghotbzadeh was receiving widespread praise for his critical statement against the militants.

Cottam asked Ghotbzadeh whether Bani-Sadr was playing an active role on the hostage issue. Cottam said our impression was that he was not meeting his responsibilities. Ghotbzadeh replied, "He doesn't have the guts for it." Cottam tried unsuccessfully to extract from Ghotbzadeh the names of the religious figures who were backing the students.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

IRAN WORKING GROUP

DATE: March 18, 1980

TIME: _____

SUBJECT: Cottam - Ghotbzadeh Conversation

Cottam spoke with Ghotbzadeh at about 5:00 pm Tehran time March 18. The mood was positive and optimistic.

Ghotbzadeh said he spent much of last night with Khomeini. He was pushing hard for the transfer of the hostages as an immediate step. He thought he would be successful but he offered no time frame.

Ghotbzadeh said the debate during the election campaign had not focused on the hostage issue. Rather, his attack on the militants had set the tone for attitudes towards the hostage question. He thought that it was not possible to describe a pattern of attitudes on the hostage issue among candidates of the religious Islamic Republican People's Party. Ghotbzadeh believed that while there was sharp difference of opinion on economic and political issues, it was probable that the attitudes of the newly-elected assemblymen would be similar to that of the Revolutionary Council in wanting to end the crisis.

Ghotbzadeh described as "excellent" prospects for ending the crisis before the new parliament convened. He wanted to send a message to us to begin to think very deeply in the next few days about ways to end the crisis. He thought there could be profound negotiations very soon. Cottam said he was unable to discover what thoughts we should be thinking but concluded that Ghotbzadeh intended to pass more detailed message to us through other channels.

Cottam asked (at my suggestion) whether he could telephone [REDACTED] to ask for details on the hostages. Ghotbzadeh discouraged that but said he would debrief [REDACTED] and give Cottam a report in a few days.

Ghotbzadeh again made reference to Cottam's "friend" who was deeply involved in the crisis. [REDACTED]

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PER 6/20/97 [REDACTED] RE NLG-97-30

BY [REDACTED] NARS DATE 9/2/97

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[REDACTED] MARCH 11, 1980

The hostages. Perhaps the State Department already has this information but it is interesting for you in any case.

1. By crosschecking, [REDACTED] believes that he has determined that of the fifty, thirty were held at the compound until recently.

[REDACTED] only saw thirty of them and it is likely that he would have been shown more of them if they had been there.

2. [REDACTED] saw 49 of them last week.

3. Michael Metrisko was brought back by ambulance from the hospital on Saturday at 4:50 PM (the visit or transfer was to take place at 5:00 PM).

4. On Sunday Dr. Gharai of the Lion and the Sun visited the hostages at the compound [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and saw 43 of them including Metrisko. According to him, all those he saw were in good physical condition.

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PER 6/20/97 GLE H DE NLC-47-30
BY AK NARS DATE 9/2/97

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Richard Cottam
Foreign Minister Ghotbzadeh

DATE: 1500 hours, March 8, 1980

Cottam said he had a good and long conversation with Ghotbzadeh. The principal theme was that Ghotbzadeh was interested in praise for his actions in the U.S. press. He said good reports from the U.S. would strengthen his hand in Tehran. Jonathan Randall had been particularly helpful in this regard.

He said the Revolutionary Council had reconfirmed by unanimous vote the decision to transfer the hostages and he would go on TV tomorrow and make a statement. He thought the transfer would proceed tomorrow. Cottam said there was an element of doubt in that prediction, however.

Ghotbzadeh said there had been erroneous reporting out of Qom. We should not regard the statement by the Imam's office as serious. The Imam had definitely been involved in the decision to transfer the hostages.

Ghotbzadeh's general attitude was very optimistic, despite the fact that there had been demonstrations against him personally in every city in Iran. He attributed his recent problems to the Tudeh and left-wing Fedayeen groups. Cottam said he may have been trying to please us with these communist explanations of the problems he faced. Cottam's judgment was that there were some very real problems in Ghotbzadeh's way, but he (Cottam) could not pin-point them. He and I speculated that the hardline religious people were trying to block the moves being made by Ghotbzadeh and Bani Sadr. Cottam emphasized that Ghotbzadeh's remarks indicated that tomorrow would be a critical day.

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Cottam said he tried to find out whether Ghotbzadeh harbored any bitterness or anger towards the U.S. He said there was none whatsoever. The mood was good. There was no particular anxiety. In passing, Ghotbzadeh said it would take two months before the hostages were released, that is, before the Legislative Assembly had been convened. This was a casual remark and when Cottam pressed him on it Ghotbzadeh said that they would certainly try to accelerate the process.

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