

## **Iran Shah-Panama**

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| corresp.         | HJ to Omar Torijos                     | 7/17/80  | A           |
| memo             | Arnie Raphael to HJ, <u>et al</u>      | 1/30/80  | A           |
| memo             | ZB to HJ                               | 3/7/80   | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 2210                            | 3/7/80   | A           |
| embtel           | Panama2001                             | 3/4/80   | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 1903                            | 2/29/80  | A           |
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| embtel           | Panama 2396                            | 3/14/80  | A           |
| deptel           | 72985                                  | 3/19/80  | A           |
| memo             | Arnie Raphael to HJ, <u>et al</u>      | 3/19/80  | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 2489                            | 3/19/80  | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 1787                            | 2/26/80  | A           |
| report           | Panama (2 pp.)                         | 1/29/80  | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 1064                            | 2/2/80   | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 1065                            | 2/2/80   | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 1070                            | 2/3/80   | A           |
| embtel           | Panama 1069                            | 2/3/80   | A           |
| memo             | Stephen Oxman to Dep. Sec.             | 12/18/79 | A           |
| corresp.         | William E. Jackson to Lloyd Cutler, HJ | 3/4/80   | A           |
| memo             | Arnie Raphael to HJ                    | 3/18/80  | A           |
| deptel           | Panama 2396                            | 3/14/80  | A           |

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| <del>memo</del>  | <del>HJ to JC, ZB, Cyrus Vance (16 pp.)</del> OPENED 1/19/93 | <del>n.d.</del> | <del>A</del> |

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~~TOP SECRET~~

TO: PRESIDENT CARTER  
SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE  
DR. BRZEZINSKI

FROM: HAMILTON JORDAN

Please find attached summary notes on my discussions today with the Panamanians. Also, several documents which I had translated pertaining to the extradition of the Shah from Panama.

There are no other copies of this document.

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958 Sec. 3.4  
PER 3/14/93 NSC HV RE MD 44C-92-161  
BY SP NARS DATE 11/4/93

### Summary of Notes from Trip

Warren Christopher called me early Saturday morning to advise me that the President thought that the trip to consult with the Panamanians at the request of General Torrijos was worth while. I returned to Washington, was briefed by Henry Precht on the status of our negotiations with the Iranians through the Secretary General and prepared to take off for Panama City to see Torrijos.

I called Torrijos to tell him of my plans but was informed that after a night's sleep and some additional thought, the General was worried that my coming to Panama might be noticed and alarm the Shah as there was a large press contingent covering the country since the Shah's arrival there. For that reason he said that it would be better for him to meet me halfway or to send a "personal representative" who could convey to me "the very important message" that had prompted his Friday night call to me. He said that he was also worried that his absence from the country might be noticed so that he was generally inclined not to go himself. We agreed to meet at 3 o'clock

at Homestead AFB. I got there by three, checked in with Warren to see if there were any new developments, made a few calls to Iowa and spent some time reviewing the materials that the State Department had given me.

The Panamanians arrived about 4:30. There were three persons in the group: my old friend Gabriel Lewis, the Panamanian Ambassador to the United Nations who hardly spoke during the three hours we spent together and Marcel Saliman (sp?) who was the person who did most of the talking. At the outset Gabriel pulled me aside and said that Marcel was very close to Torrijos and very shrewd. Gabriel said that while he is "too much of a leftist for me" that he had great credibility among the students in Panama and had been instrumental in representing Torrijos with the Sandinistas.

I stated at the outside the posture that I was in - that I had conveyed to the President the request of General Torrijos that I fly immediately to Panama to receive some news about the hostages. That because of the

President's friendship and respect for General Torrijos, he was anxious to honor his request that I come to Panama. I also told them that I was involved only on the periphery of our foreign policy process as related to Iran and the hostages and had been even less involved in recent weeks due to the pressures of the campaign. I told them that I was authorized by the President only to listen and report back immediately the information that they had and that I could neither speak for the President nor make decisions. I told them that I intended to listen, ask questions and take very careful notes, and that the essence of what was said would be passed on directly to the three of you.

They began by presenting me with the English version of the formal request of extradition for the Shah from the Iranian government. They said that now it was publicly known that such a request had been made, and in spite of their public statements that they did not intend to extradite the Shah, they had a legal process which could not be ignored; that if they attempted to ignore it, it would only play into the hands of the students and leftists in Panama who were using the Shah's presence in Panama to try to bring down the government and Torrijos.

I prepared myself for a long discussion about the Shah and the problems that he was causing the Panamanians, but from that point on the entire conversation focused on the hostage situation and their hope that this new information might be helpful to their early release.

Marcel began by giving me a detailed chronology of the ~~past~~<sup>PAST</sup> couple of weeks. He said that in late December two men presented themselves in Panama as representatives of the Iranian government. They presented letters from the Foreign Minister requesting the formal extradition of the Shah from Panama. They also issued a verbal invitation for the Panamanians to send back to Iran with them a personal representative to meet with the Foreign Minister. The Panamanians sent Marcel and Romulo Escobar back to Iran with them.

The two men - who I will call Mr. X and Mr. Y - now live in France and are longtime friends of Mr. Ghotbzadeh. Mr. X has known the Ayatollah Khomeini for ten years. He practices law in France. Mr. Y is an Argentinian who was formerly associated with the Peron government. He

also is a longtime friend of the Foreign Minister.

Traveling with these two men, the Panamanians traveled to Iran, arriving last weekend. They had four separate meetings with the Foreign Minister. The other two men accompanied the Panamanians to these meetings and seemed to Marcel to be on very close terms with Ghotbzadeh. There meetings with the Foreign Minister took place right after the Waldheim visit so Marcel has some information and reports on Ghotbzadeh's attitude that are interesting and possibly relevant.

They met with the Foreign Minister on Sunday, January 6th from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and later that same day from 8:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. On Monday, January 7th, they met with the Foreign Minister from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and later that afternoon from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. They made much of showing me their schedules, appointment books, etc., to convince me that they had seen the Foreign Minister and had spent this much time with him. Based on all that I saw and heard, I believe that they did. Marcel also took copious notes of those meetings and read from them to me, saying that "Ghotbzadeh said ....." and "the Foreign Minister told me....."

Instead of trying to retrace chronologically what was said at each meeting, I will try to relate the essence of their meetings and discussions with the Foreign Minister. I made comments throughout the presentation in an attempt to clarify different things that were said to the Panamanians and also to draw Marcel out.

Marcel said that at the beginning of the first meeting the Foreign Minister said that he wanted to explain to them the background on the embassy takeover. He said that the plot to overthrow the American Embassy was an "American conspiracy" involving Rockefeller, Kissinger and others who had a dual purpose: First, to create an international crisis that would undermine the Ayatollah's efforts to establish an effective and strong Islamic Republic; and second, to create a crisis of great magnitude for President Carter that would lead to his political defeat and would result in the election of a Republican that was controlled by Kissinger and Rockefeller who would work to have the Shah reinstated as the leader of the Iranian people.

The Foreign Minister said that because of the "American plot", everyone was now in a very difficult position. He said that the Panamanians were respected throughout Latin America and the Third World, but their acceptance of the "criminal Shah" at the insistence of the United States had done great damage to their image in the world. He said that President Carter was in danger of losing his Presidency if he did not successfully resolve the hostage situation. He said that the Ayatollah was in a very difficult position in Iran - he said that while he and Khomeini had no hope or desire to recover the Shah, that the students had become an increasingly powerful and difficult group with which to deal and that some way had to be found to resolve the crisis that did not make it appear that Khomeini had given in to U.S. pressure. He said that the Ayatollah had resorted to trying to substitute students totally loyal to him for the "regulars" holding the hostages, but that once inside the compound they all behaved the same way.

Ghotbzadeh talked quite frankly about his own political plans, but often invoked Khomeini's name to suggest that

the future of the Islamic Republic was in the hands of both men, not just Khomeini. He said the greatest threat to their "moderate" position was the sanctions vote which was presently before the Security Council. He said that if the vote was taken and the United States was successful in obtaining the necessary nine votes, that this would make it much more difficult to resolve the hostage situation at an early date. Also, he said that the Soviet veto which was anticipated on the sanctions vote would be a tremendous propaganda victory for "Communist elements in the compound and in Iran". (I interrupted here to point out to Marcel that there was a tremendous difference in the unsuccessful attempt of the Security Council to impose sanctions and the actual imposition of sanctions. Marcel said that he understood and had pointed this out to Ghotbzadeh whose response was that it was the "political action of the vote itself" which would be troublesome for he and Khomeini to deal with.)

Ghotbzadeh went on to talk about the importance of trying to find some solution before the elections on the 25th of January. Marcel reported that he expressed repeatedly his concern about this date and that the only conclusion he

could draw was that it was perceived by the Foreign Minister as something that was critical to his own chances of being elected President.

The Foreign Minister said that there were three ways to resolve the present crisis: the death of the "criminal Shah, the potential of the Waldheim channel or the potential of a new channel of negotiation with the Panamanians.

The Shah's Death. Ghotbzadeh said that before the Waldheim mission, it was widely believed by Khomeini and many members of the Revolutionary Council that the Shah's illness had been exaggerated. He said that no one could understand the paranoia that existed in Iran about the Shah's being returned and reinstated by the United States. He said that Waldheim had brought a medical report (Marcel had the impression that it was a written medical file) that convinced the key people on the Council that the Shah was a "dying man". He said that the Shah would not die quick enough to satisfy he and Khomeini, but that the Shah's death was a certain way to break the impasse.

The "Waldheim Channel". The Foreign Minister said that "more was accomplished by the Secretary-General than is known publicly" and that there were problems but that the Waldheim visit had been "worthwhile". He said that with the consent of the United States, the Secretary-General could put together a package which contained three basic elements important to he and Khomeini. First, that Sean McBride would have to be involved in whatever tribunal was established to investigate the crimes of the Shah. Secondly, that while they did not want or expect the Shah back in Iran\*, the General Assembly had to recognize the right of the Iranians to seek the legal extradition of the Shah from Panama. And finally, that once the tribunal with McBride was set up and the right of Iran to seek extradition was recognized, the American hostages would be released.

\*Ghotbzadeh said that in the early days of the embassy takeover, they had dreamed of the return of the Shah, but that if he returned now, it would be an even greater problem for he and Khomeini as the country would be torn apart by the emotion and chaos caused by his return and the very different views as to what should be done with him.

The "New Panamanian Channel". He said that the third possibility was the "Panamanian channel" which was opened by the visit of the Panamanians to Iran. He said that they recognized the great pressure that Panama was under from the United States to accept and protect the Shah. He said that he and Khomeini realized that it would be impossible for them to extradite the Shah. He said that his own lawyers had researched the Panamanian law and found six separate legal arguments that would prevent the Panamanians from actually extraditing the Shah. But, Ghotbzadeh argued that it was the "principle of extradition" that was important to he and the Ayatollah. And that if the Panamanians could begin the legal process of extradition, that would be enough for the Ayatollah to go the students and insist that they release the hostages.

Ghotbzadeh said that he wanted to go to Panama to personally deliver the papers of extradition. He said also that he wanted to meet with me (Jordan) secretly as I had two of the three important relationships - a relation-

ship with President Carter and General Torrijos, but not with him (Ghotbzadeh). He said because of the Waldheim trip and the upcoming elections, he did not know if there was time for such a mission now.

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It is late - almost 4:00 a.m. - and I need to wrap this up and give you some thoughts and recommendations.

I was skeptical at the outset about Marcel and his visit to Iran, but the more I heard the more realistic and plausible it all sounded. Specific things that Ghotbzadeh said to him all seem to reinforce things that we had heard through other channels.

The larger question relates to the fact that for better or worse, the Iranians have opened a channel of communication with the Panamanians.

At best, I think you could argue that the Iranians did this consciously to have a second channel open to them to pursue in a serious way negotiations leading to the release of the hostages and/or to reinforce the contacts

that they are having with Waldheim. At worst, and much more likely, the Iranians have made contact with the Panamanians to see if they can use the leverage of the unrest in Panama and their <sup>(TERRORS)</sup> relationship with us to soften our negotiating posture on the critical questions. You might ~~SPECULATE~~ <sup>SPECULATE</sup> that while the UN channel might be producing enough for Ghotbzadeh to live with, it was not enough for the Ayatollah, and the Foreign Minister is hoping to move the thing further along with the Panamanians.

This contact between the Panamanians and the Foreign Minister is both an opportunity and a potential problem. To the extent that we can coordinate between the Waldheim channel and the Panamanians, we can reinforce the UN package on the critical question of "the right of the Iranians to seek legal extradition". If we fail to coordinate with the Panamanians, we risk their taking some unilateral action that undermines the UN effort, destroys our bargaining posture with Ghotbzadeh and scares the Shah to death.

Now that the Panamanians are involved in this process, we have little choice but to treat them seriously and keep them generally informed. If this present negotiation appears to have a real chance for success, it is equally important that we brief the Shah, as he will become nervous as stories about his "extradition" appear in the Panamanian and international press. It seems that at the point and time that our latest position is seriously considered by the Iranians, Lloyd Cutler and/or myself should fly to Panama to reassure the Shah. Or, to quote Gabriel Lewis, "he should be a part of this conspiracy".

When I returned tonight, I contacted ~~Harold~~ Harold Saunders and was debriefed by him. He said that one thing that we might do to involve and also utilize the Panamanians would be to give them tomorrow a general report on the recent proposal that was sent to Iran, and that since a critical element of it involved the principle of Iran being able to "seek the legal extradition of the Shah", we might encourage them tomorrow to contact

Ghotbzadeh directly, tell him that they are ready to play a role in the resolution of the crisis and ask him to accept the most recent UN proposal which contains the language on extradition that is important to them.

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Mr. President, there is a lot more I could tell you, but believe that this covers the major points. I will be at home tomorrow and will be glad to help further in any way possible.