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19 September 1980

MEMORANDUMIRANIAN ISLAMIC ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON  
PAST RELATIONS WITH THE US

*During the Islamic Assembly's debate on Thursday former Prime Minister Bazargan and other moderates responded to attacks on their past contacts with the US by claiming that Khomeini a year ago had supported military relations with the US and that Ayatollah Beheshti and other clerics had contacts with US officials. We have no specific evidence to support Bazargan's statement that Khomeini had instructed him in 1979 to "prepare public opinion" for a military supply relationship with the US. In any case, the seizure of the US Embassy made it impossible to pursue any initiatives.*

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Iran's policy toward the US under the Bazargan Government was directed toward continued but limited military and economic relations. Foreign Minister Yazdi told embassy officials in Tehran in June 1979 that it was the policy of the government and of Ayatollah Khomeini to improve relations with the US and not to cut them. During the summer and fall of 1979 Bazargan frequently noted Iran's need for military and commercial supplies and at least once requested intelligence information from the US. In numerous meetings with US officials, Bazargan's ministers of Defense, Commerce, and Agriculture noted the importance of continuing relations with the US.

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Ayatollah Beheshti met with US officials in Tehran on 27 October 1979. Beheshti noted that the US must demonstrate support for the Iranian revolution by refusing to admit the Shah and by overcoming delays in shipments of military and commercial spare parts needed by Iran. Beheshti said

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the Iranian leadership recognized it could not isolate the country from outside influences or the technological and commercial interests which its economy required. He emphasized, however, the regime's determination to remain in step with the popular feeling of Khomeini's constituency and that if necessary the mass of Iran's population would "go it alone."

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Ayatollah Montazeri, generally regarded as Khomeini's choice as his own successor, met with US officials in Tehran a week before the Embassy takeover. Montazeri was friendly and spoke of his great admiration for President Carter. Montazeri was critical of US relations with Israel, but he commented that he hoped contact between the Embassy and the Iranian religious leaders could be expanded and continued.

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Bazargan's comments should not be interpreted as indicating that Iran is looking to the US for military aid at this time. Bazargan is simply trying to defend his own record.

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SUBJECT: Iranian Islamic Assembly Debate on Past  
Relations with the US

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