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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DCI

Iranian Support for International Terrorism  
22 November 1986

Key Judgments

o Iran uses international terrorism to achieve specific foreign policy objectives:

- to drive US and Western influence out of the Middle East;
- to intimidate the Persian Gulf states to end their support for Iraq;
- to eliminate opponents of the Khomeini regime; and
- to promote Islamic fundamentalism.

o There are differences among the Iranian leadership regarding the utility of terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy. We believe the ability of the more moderate factions to prevail in restraining the use of terrorism--in an effort to reduce Iran's diplomatic isolation, expand trade relations, [REDACTED]--has contributed to a decline in Iranian-sponsored terrorist attacks.

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o It is uncertain whether Tehran will continue to restrain its use of terrorism in the wake of the exposure of renewed US-Iranian contacts. The need for [REDACTED] technology, trade, and financial aid--as well as the persistent fear of military retaliation--should temper any move towards a resurgence of terrorist activity.

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o Iran provides significant support to Hizballah in Lebanon and has been deeply involved in many Hizballah activities, including terrorist operations. Iran's efforts to promote Hizballah, however, are complicated by rivalries among Iranian officials and factionalism within the Lebanese movement.

[REDACTED] The Lebanese radicals have been developing ties to other groups and we believe that Hizballah could survive without further Iranian assistance.

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o Iran has participated in--and benefits from--the holding of the Western hostages in Lebanon. Tehran, however, does not totally dominate the hostage situation and has not always been successful in imposing its will upon the Hizballah captors. Holding Western hostages serves specific Hizballah interests: bargaining chips for relatives imprisoned in Kuwait, and protection of its sanctuary in the Bekaa Valley.

o Major Iranian leaders bear an intense hostility towards the United States.

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**Objectives**

Iran's support for terrorism stems primarily from the perceptions of the clerical regime that it has a religious duty to export its Islamic revolution and to wage, by whatever means, a constant struggle against the perceived oppressor states. Terrorism is also used to further Iranian national interests.

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**Iranian Sponsorship of Hizballah in Lebanon**

Lebanon has been the centerpiece of Iran's attempts to export its revolution. In Lebanon, Iran believes that it has an excellent opportunity to help establish a second Islamic

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republic. Tehran's principal instrument in these efforts has been the Hizballah movement, a loose organization of radical Lebanese Shia factions. Beginning in mid-1982, Iran helped found the Hizballah movement, providing critical financial and material support, and political guidance to the nascent movement. Iranian officials have also actively supported and participated in some significant terrorist operations perpetrated by Hizballah.

In July 1982, Tehran dispatched several hundred members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley to support the fledgling Islamic Amal militia, a splinter group of Shia radicals headed by Husayn Musawi. [REDACTED]

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Tehran's efforts to promote Hizballah as the vanguard of the Islamic revolution in Lebanon have been further complicated by its inability to unify the various radical factions. Hizballah remains essentially a conglomeration of tribal and regional units of street fighters that coalesce around prominent local shaykhs or paramilitary leaders. Iran's degree of influence over these factions varies widely. The Council of Lebanon, still the element of

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Iran's inconsistent control over Hizballah activities has been demonstrated in the evidence concerning Tehran's involvement in the holding of Western hostages in Lebanon. Tehran clearly has profited from the continued detention of the hostages, deriving significant political, military, and economic benefits. Iranian officials, especially among the IRGC contingent, have cooperated with the Hizballah cells involved, facilitating the detention and orchestrating the release of some hostages.

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Tehran, however, has not been able to completely dominate the Hizballah captors and unilaterally control developments in the continuing hostage crisis.

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Persian Gulf

In the Persian Gulf Iran has used and supported terrorism to pursue four principal objectives:

- o to force them to stop aiding Iraq in the war effort;
- o to prosecute the war against Iraq;
- o to induce them to adopt oil policies favored by Iran; and
- o to further radicalize Shia populations in the Arab countries.

[REDACTED]

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The level of activity against the Gulf states has declined recently as Iran achieved at least a short-term tactical victory in causing Saudi Arabia to bring its oil policies more in line with its desires. We have no doubt, however, that should serious reverses--<sup>o</sup> deleterious to Iranian interests occur--it would resort to terrorism as a tool of persuasion.

Iranian Exiles and Dissidents

Another principal focus of Iranian-supported terrorist activities has been the suppression of opponents of the Iranian regime.

Khomeini likely recognizes the potential for exile leaders to promote and exploit domestic discontent arising from the dismal economic situation and increasing weariness with the war. Having spent years in exile himself, he is wary of the potential threat these individuals pose. At present, however, the exiles are poorly organized and pose no real threat to the regime.

The level of terrorist activity against exiles has declined over that seen in the post-revolution period.

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Outlook

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Moreover, Iranian energies are focused on ousting the Ba'thist regime in Iraq. The course of the war is likely to have a significant influence on the Mujlis' decisions regarding the use of terrorism to intimidate the Gulf states. Iran's desperate economic situation increases the prospect that Tehran will turn to the use of subversion and terrorism to induce them to stop aiding Iraq. On the other hand, the moderates could claim that diplomatic measures and selective use of terrorism have proven successful in forcing a change in Gulf oil policies, and argue against taking steps that could again bring world focus on Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism.

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In Lebanon, Hizballah is certain to continue its campaign against Western interests, but its own successes have sharply reduced the targets available.

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continue to provide significant support to Hizballah and remain the preeminent outside influence on the radicals. Hizballah, however will further develop its ties to other groups, particularly the PLO, providing it an alternate source of support should Iranian aid be withdrawn.

Hizballah likely will not release all of its Western hostages, with or without Iranian help, as long as it feels hostage-taking serves its own agenda. Particularly, Hizballah will continue to use the hostages as bargaining chips for the Da'wa prisoners in Kuwait and to protect its sanctuary in Ba'labakk from Israeli or US air strikes.

Serious reverses in the war or the perception of impending defeat might cause Iran to lash out with all available weapons, including terrorism, in an attempt to stop others from aiding Iraq. The radical faction would be the most likely proponent of this tactic. Those looking to the post-war and post-Khomeini era, however, might be expected to argue for restraint in the hope of quickly renewing more favorable relations with the West and bringing an influx of desperately needed currency and highly desired Western technology into the country. A campaign of terrorism would obviate such aspirations. These desires may act as a tempering factor. The path chosen, we believe, will depend largely on the strength of the leadership within the factions at that time.

[REDACTED] Iranian leaders [REDACTED] bear an intense hostility

towards the United States.

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