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1979-1980: Attempting to Rescue the American Hostages in Iran

On 4 November 1979, Iranian militants stormed the U.S. embassy in Teheran taking 69 Americans hostage. Shortly thereafter, the militants released sixteen hostages leaving 53 still held in the embassy. By 12 November the Agency had formed a task force under the DDCI to coordinate and implement its support to a military operation which would have as its purpose the rescue of the hostages. From the very beginning of this operation and throughout its duration, OTS played a significant role in providing technical support.

Six other Americans, who were State Department employees attached to the U.S. embassy in non-intelligence capacities, eluded the militants and fled to two official residences of the Canadian mission. A plan was developed for their exfiltration by documenting them in alias as employees of a phony company which could ostensibly have legitimate business in Teheran. To execute this plan, an OTS consultant "established" the business, [redacted]

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(b)(3)
(b)(5)
(b)(6)

[redacted] The six "refugees" were moved to a single Canadian residence where the OTS specialists could have access to them. Using genuine Canadian passports furnished by the Canadian government, [redacted]

[redacted] The counterfeit documentation was not questioned by Iranian authorities, and all six departed Iran on a regularly scheduled commercial airline.

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[Large redacted block]

(b)(1)
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(b)(1)
(b)(3)

The CIA task force operated on a very strict need-to-know basis. This at times caused uneasiness among some supervisors who were not given any details of the operation but were directed to support it nonetheless. It spoke well for the many people involved that the secrecy of the operation was maintained during the six month period leading up to the rescue attempt.

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