

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

15 November 1979

MEMORANDUM

I believe that any rescue operation into Teheran within the next two weeks would have a very low probability of success.

We need better to help you prepare for a decision on such an operation, and on what the alternatives are.

First, you deserve an explicit statement of the likelihood of success of a rescue attempt. (Recall that the JCS reviewed the plan for the Bay of Pigs and judged it to have a "fair" chance of success. To the military, "fair" is like a "D" in college; the White House interpreted the JCS opinion as a "fair chance of success.")

Next, you need to know how the likelihood of success would improve over time. You may not be able to control the timing, but you will want to consider alternatives in this light.

In addition, you deserve optional rescue strategies that have different political requirements. Only you can balance the political costs with the changes in probability they afford.

I suggest that you ask the JCS and Secretary of Defense to prepare a chart like the attached. (A second copy with only nominal entries is also attached to provide a feel for how useful it might or might not be.)

Finally, you deserve a considered list of alternatives. If you eschew a rescue operation, the pressure of public opinion will require as immediate and decisive a set of actions as possible.

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RESCUE OPERATION OPTIONS

<u>Plan</u>	<u>Type of Operation</u>	<u>External Support</u>	<u>Nov 20</u>	<u>Nov 27</u>	<u>Dec 3</u>	<u>Dec 10</u>	<u>Dec 17</u>	<u>Key Factors Driving Probabilities</u>
A								
B								
C								
D								
E								
F								

\* "Success" defined as 50% of hostages and rescue team exfiltrated safely.

RESCUE OPERATION OPTIONS

Plan	Type of Operation	External Support	Probability of Success* by:				Key Factors Driving Probabilities	
			Nov 20	Nov 27	Dec 3	Dec 10		
A	Air land rescue team; helo to Tehran and return; fly out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very low	Very low	Low	Low-Medium	Medium	Vulnerability of air lead; availability of helos.
B	Air land rescue team; helo to Tehran and return; fly out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very low	Low	Low-Medium	Medium	Medium	Vulnerability of air lead; availability of helos. distances less; chance of land exfiltration higher.
C	Air land rescue team; infiltrate to Tehran; exfiltrate by road to air field.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very low	Very low	Very low	Low	Low-Medium	Difficulty of (b)(1) (b)(3) infiltration by road.
D	Infiltrate attack team; helo directly in and out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not possible	Not possible	Not possible	Low	Low-Medium	Need time to infiltrate rescue team, helo distance long.
E	Infiltrate attack team; helo directly in and out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not possible	Not possible	Low	Low-Medium	Medium	Distances less.
F	Infiltrate attack team; helo directly in and out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not possible	Not possible	Low-Medium	Medium	Medium-High	Distances still less.

\* "Success" defined as 50% of hostages and rescue team exfiltrated safely.

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