

NSC 136/1

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A REPORT
RECORD
TO THE
COPY
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

by

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

on

UNITED STATES POLICY REGARDING THE PRESENT SITUATION IN IRAN

November 20, 1952

WASHINGTON

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NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

to the

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

on

UNITED STATES POLICY REGARDING THE
PRESENT SITUATION IN IRAN

- References:
- A. NSC 136
 - B. NSC Action No. 680
 - C. Memos for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated November 18 and November 19, 1952.
 - D. NSC 107/2
 - E. NSC 117
 - F. SE-33
 - G. NIE-75
 - H. NSC 129
 - I. Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, subject, "Documents Resulting From Conversations With the British in Regard to the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East", dated November 19, 1947

At the 125th Council meeting with the President presiding the National Security Council and Mr. Emmerglick for the Attorney General considered and adopted NSC 136, subject to the revisions recommended therein by the Senior NSC Staff in the enclosure to the reference memorandum of November 19 (NSC Action No. 680). The Director of Defense Mobilization was unable to attend the Council meeting, but his office has indicated concurrence with NSC 136, as amended.

The views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on this subject transmitted by the reference memorandum of November 18, including the reference to the Treaty of Friendship Between Persia and the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic signed at Moscow on February 26, 1921, were noted by the Council and Mr. Emmerglick for the Attorney General in connection with their action on this report. The Council also noted that Mr. Emmerglick for the Attorney General, while concurring in principle with subparagraph (4) on page 4 of NSC 136, reserved the position of the Department of Justice on specific plans which might be submitted to it pursuant thereto.

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The report, as amended and adopted, was subsequently submitted to the President for consideration. The President has this date approved NSC 136, as amended and enclosed herewith, and directs its implementation by all appropriate executive departments and agencies of the U. S. Government under the coordination of the Secretary of State.

Accordingly NSC 107/2 is superseded by the enclosed report. The policy relating to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East contained in the enclosure to Reference I is superseded by the enclosure and NSC 129/1 approved on April 24, 1952.

JAMES S. LAY, Jr.
Executive Secretary.

cc: The Secretary of the Treasury
The Attorney General
The Director of Defense Mobilization

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STATEMENT OF POLICY
Proposed by the
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

on

THE PRESENT SITUATION IN IRAN

1. It is of critical importance to the United States that Iran remain an independent and sovereign nation, not dominated by the USSR. Because of its key strategic position, its petroleum resources, its vulnerability to intervention or armed attack by the USSR, and its vulnerability to political subversion, Iran must be regarded as a continuing objective of Soviet expansion. The loss of Iran by default or by Soviet intervention would:

a. Be a major threat to the security of the entire Middle East, including Pakistan and India.

b. Permit communist denial to the free world of access to Iranian oil and seriously threaten the loss of other Middle Eastern oil.

c. Increase the Soviet Union's capability to threaten important United States-United Kingdom lines of communication.

d. Damage United States prestige in nearby countries and with the exception of Turkey and possibly Pakistan, seriously weaken, if not destroy, their will to resist communist pressures.

e. Set off a series of military, political and economic developments, the consequences of which would seriously endanger the security interests of the United States.

2. Present trends in Iran are unfavorable to the maintenance of control by a non-communist regime for an extended period of time. In wresting the political initiative from the Shah, the landlords, and other traditional holders of power, the National Front politicians now in power have at least temporarily eliminated every alternative to their own rule except the Communist Tudeh Party. However, the ability of the National Front to maintain control of the situation indefinitely is uncertain. The political upheaval which brought the nationalists to power has heightened popular desire for promised economic and social betterment and has increased

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social unrest. At the same time, nationalist failure to restore the oil industry to operation has led to near-exhaustion of the government's financial reserves and to deficit financing to meet current expenses, and is likely to produce a progressive deterioration of the economy at large.

3. It is now estimated that communist forces will probably not gain control of the Iranian government during 1953*. Nevertheless, the Iranian situation contains very great elements of instability. Any US policy regarding Iran must accordingly take into account the danger that the communists might be enabled to gain the ascendancy as a result of such possible developments as a struggle for power within the National Front, more effective communist infiltration of the government than now appears probable, government failure to maintain the security forces and to take effective action against communist activity, or a major crop failure. It is clear that the United Kingdom no longer possesses the capability unilaterally to assure stability in the area. If present trends continue unchecked, Iran could be effectively lost to the free world in advance of an actual Communist takeover of the Iranian Government. Failure to arrest present trends in Iran involves a serious risk to the national security of the United States.

4. For the reasons outlined above, the major United States policy objective with respect to Iran is to prevent the country from coming under communist control. The United States should, therefore, be prepared to pursue the policies which would be most effective in accomplishing this objective. In the light of the present situation the United States should adopt and pursue the following policies:

a. Continue to assist in every practicable way to effect an early and equitable liquidation of the oil controversy. 7

b. Be prepared to take the necessary measures to help Iran to start up her oil industry and to secure markets for her oil so that Iran may benefit from substantial oil revenues. 7

c. Be prepared to provide prompt United States budgetary aid to Iran if, pending restoration of her oil industry and oil markets, such aid is necessary to halt a serious deterioration of the financial and political situation in Iran.

*See NIE-75, "Probable Developments in Iran Through 1953," published November 13, 1952.

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In carrying out a, b, and c above, the United States should:

(1) Maintain full consultation with the United Kingdom.

(2) Avoid unnecessarily sacrificing legitimate United Kingdom interests or unnecessarily impairing United States-United Kingdom relations.

(3) Not permit the United Kingdom to veto any United States actions which the United States considers essential to the achievement of the policy objective set forth above.

(4) Be prepared to avail itself of the authority of the President to approve voluntary agreements and programs under Section 708 (a) and (b) of the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended.

d. Recognize the strength of Iranian nationalist feeling; try to direct it into constructive channels and be ready to exploit any opportunity to do so, bearing in mind the desirability of strengthening in Iran the ability and desire of the Iranian people to resist communist pressure.

e. Continue present programs of military, economic and technical assistance to the extent they will help to restore stability and increase internal security, and be prepared to increase such assistance to support Iranian resistance to communist pressure.

f. Encourage the adoption by the Iranian Government of necessary financial, judicial and administrative and other reforms.

g. Continue special political measures designed to assist in achieving the above purposes.

h. Plan now for the eventual inclusion of Iran in any regional defense arrangement which may be developed in the Middle East if such inclusion should later prove feasible.

5. In the event of either an attempted or an actual communist seizure of power in one or more of the provinces of Iran or in Tehran, the United States should support a

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non-communist Iranian Government, including participation in the military support of such a government if necessary and useful.* Preparations for such an eventuality should include:

a. Plans for the specific military, economic, diplomatic, and psychological measures which should be taken to support a non-communist Iranian Government or to prevent all or part of Iran or adjacent areas from falling under communist domination.

b. Politico-military discussions with the British Government and such other governments as may be appropriate, with a view to determining (1) courses of action which might be pursued and (2) the allocation of responsibility in carrying out such courses of action in the area.

c. Preparatory measures for the implementation of special political operations in Iran and adjacent Middle Eastern areas, including the procurement of such equipment as may be required. Effective liaison with the United Kingdom should be maintained with respect to such operations.

d. Perfection of plans concerning the handling of the matter by the United Nations if and when that becomes necessary.

6. In the event that a communist government achieves complete control of Iran so rapidly that no non-communist Iranian Government is available to request assistance, the position of the United States would have to be determined in the light of the situation at the time, although politico-military-economic discussions leading to plans for meeting such a situation should be carried on with the British Government and with such other governments as may be appropriate. In this contingency, the United States should make every feasible effort, particularly through special political operations, to endeavor to develop or maintain localized centers of resistance and to harass, undermine, and if possible, to bring about the overthrow of the communist government.

*If it is found necessary for the United States to provide military forces in this area, implementation will require either a substantial augmentation of over-all United States forces or a reduction of present United States military commitments elsewhere.

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7. In the event of a Soviet attack by organized USSR military forces against Iran, the United States in common prudence would have to proceed on the assumption that global war is probably imminent. Accordingly, the United States should then immediately:

a. Decide in the light of the circumstances existing at the time whether to attempt to localize the action or to treat it as a casus belli. In either case necessary measures should include direct diplomatic action and resort to the United Nations with the objectives of:

(1) Making clear to the world the aggressive character of the Soviet action.

(2) Making clear to the world United States preference for a peaceful solution and the conditions upon which the United States would, in concert with other members of the United Nations, accept such a settlement.

(3) Obtaining the authorization of the United Nations for member nations to take appropriate action in the name of the United Nations to assist Iran.

b. Consider a direct approach to the highest Soviet leaders.

c. Place itself in the best possible position to meet the increased threat of global war.

d. Consult with selected allies to perfect coordinated plans.

e. Take action against the aggressor to the extent and in the manner which would best contribute to the security of the United States.

f. Prepare to maintain, if necessary, an Iranian Government-in-exile.