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By **MB** Date **04/09/02**

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

71-1078

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 24, 1971
TIME: 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: Under Secretary's Office

SUBJECT: Iran Military Needs

PARTICIPANTS: H.E. Amir-Aslan Afshar, Ambassador of Iran
Mr. John N. Irwin II, Under Secretary of State
Mr. Jack C. Miklos, Director for Iranian Affairs (NEA/IRN)

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After an exchange of pleasantries with the Under Secretary, Ambassador Afshar remarked that he had recently seen the Shah at San Moritz and had been requested by him to draw our attention to the important role Iran plays in its part of the world. When one looks at the map extending from Burma to Greece, one sees nothing but instability and uncertainty with the sole exception of Iran.

Ambassador Afshar noted that in order for Iran to protect itself and help those around it, it must be militarily strong, and it looked to the United States for assistance in this respect. He said that he hoped the Export-Import Bank would be able to provide more credit for Iran to buy military equipment in the United States, and also that we would not put limits on the military equipment Iran wanted to obtain. The Under Secretary noted that there were several factors which influence the amount of assistance we could provide to friendly countries. Important among these was the amount of appropriations the Congress was willing to legislate and the volume of competing requests for these resources. The Under Secretary noted we were not always able to persuade the Congress to agree with our view of the needs. This was true not only of requirements to help our friends but also requirements to meet our own security and civilian needs. Nevertheless, we have helped Iran in the past, we are greatly impressed with the progress it has made, and we hope to be able to help it in the future.

NEA/IRN:JCMiklos

JCM

(Drafting Office and Officer)

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E.O. 12958, as amended

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The Under Secretary recalled that during his brief visit to Tehran in January, he had heard of a study the Iranian Government was undertaking to examine its military requirements and the financial, manpower, training, and maintenance implications of these requirements on available resources and competing civilian needs. He thought this was a most interesting and useful undertaking and looked forward to hearing more about it.

Ambassador Afshar said that in connection with improving Iran's military posture, he hoped that the United States could help to train additional Iranian pilots for C-130s and helicopters. The Under Secretary noted that we had been helpful to Iran in this respect in the past (which the Ambassador gratefully acknowledged), and indicated that we would be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to additional requests. He cautioned however that we would of course know better how fully responsive we could be once the Iranian Government had given us a specific idea of what it believed its requirements to be.

Harking back to instability in the area and the constructive role Iran could play in the future, the Under Secretary referred to the problem of the Tunbs and Abu Musa and the Federation of Trucial States. He said that he hoped Iran would give further thought to its stated position about opposing the Federation if the Sheikhs would not agree to Iran's position on the Islands. He said we felt that it would be in Iran's interests and the interests of its neighbors if some sort of federation could be formed before the British left, although noting that such a federation would more likely involve seven or fewer states rather than the nine that had been envisaged up until now. Ambassador Afshar said that Iran felt very deeply about the need to have these Islands. The Under Secretary replied that he understood that Iran felt it may have to seize these Islands by force but in whatever way the Islands problem was settled, he hoped that Iran could consider its attitude toward the Federation a separate issue. Ambassador Afshar said he understood.

Ambassador Afshar then turned to the question of an open letter to President Nixon that had been published in the Washington Post on March 15. He commented that the alleged author of the letter, which was highly derogatory to the Shah, the Royal Family, and Iran, was non-existent as was the so-called "Free Iran" organization. He said

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that he had talked to the President of the Washington Post, Mr. Ignatius, asking why this letter had not carried the usual notice that it was a paid advertisement. Further he had questioned the Washington Post's willingness to print a letter from a non-existent person and a non-existent organization. He said Mr. Ignatius had told him that the absence of a notice that the letter was a paid advertisement was an inadvertent oversight and that the Post does not normally print letters from non-existent organizations. Ambassador Afshar left the impression that he was not entirely satisfied with Mr. Ignatius' explanation. The Under Secretary commented that the appearance of this letter under the circumstances described suggested poor practice on the part of a publication of reputed high standards, but went on to note that under our system of freedom of the press all sorts of things including attacks on our own Government appeared in the newspapers. He was certain that the Ambassador understood that under our system nothing much could be done about it except to try to insure that the press and the public were informed of all the facts.