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ARTICLE



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ABSTRACT

This article explains a US initiative to prepare resistance forces for use in the event of a Soviet invasion or communist attempt to seize power in Iran during the early Cold War era. It begins by discussing similar ‘stay-behind’ operations in Europe in this era and the conditions that led US officials to develop one in Iran. It then explains what this stay-behind operation consisted of and why US officials eventually abandoned it. The paper concludes with a discussion of how the stay-behind operation in Iran differed from those in Europe and the important role it played in the decision-making that led to the 1953 coup in Iran.

Introduction

On 2 August 1951, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) approved a plan to develop ‘stay-behind’ capabilities in Iran in cooperation with the Qashqai tribal confederation, which was based in south-central Iran, around Shiraz. Under this plan, CIA personnel were to recruit a guerrilla force of Qashqai and other tribesmen and establish parachute drop zones, aircraft landing strips, sabotage targets, safe houses, and supply routes to assist these guerrillas. The purpose of this guerrilla force was to remain behind enemy lines and undertake resistance activity in the event of a Soviet invasion or communist seizure of power, which seemed quite possible during this tense period of the Cold War. By March 1953, Qashqai leaders had agreed to provide 20,000 tribesmen for this guerrilla force and the CIA had stockpiled enough arms, ammunition, and demolition supplies to equip 14,000 guerrillas for 6 months.¹

Similar stay-behind operations were established in various Western European and East Asian countries during this period to prepare for resistance to a Soviet invasion or communist seizure of power. US officials undertook the stay-behind operation in Iran for much the same purpose, and it resembled these other operations in many ways. However, it also differed from them in certain ways, providing useful insight into this little-known aspect of the Cold War.

Moreover, as US officials became increasingly concerned about the threat from Iran’s communist Tudeh Party in late 1952, they expanded the stay-behind operation and changed its main focus from resisting a Soviet invasion to resisting a Tudeh seizure of power. Indeed, the stay-behind operation became the centerpiece of a broad contingency plan developed by the Truman administration to prevent a Tudeh takeover. The Eisenhower administration inherited this plan but soon decided to carry out a *coup d’état* against Iran’s prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq, to prevent the Tudeh from seizing power. This coup occurred in August 1953, severely affecting Iranian politics. The story of the stay-behind operation, therefore, provides important insight into the decision-making that led to the 1953 coup.

Despite the importance of this stay-behind operation, it has barely been mentioned in the relevant literature. This study provides a detailed account of this operation. It begins with a brief overview of the general context in which Cold War-era stay-behind operations were developed. It

then explains the background and planning that led US officials to establish a stay-behind operation in Iran and sketches how this operation evolved. This discussion is based mainly on declassified US government documents, especially documents contained in a volume of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series that was released in 2017.² These documents contain considerable information on the stay-behind operation that has not been examined in previous studies, though some aspects of it remain unclear. Based on this material, the Conclusion of this study draws important new conclusions about Cold War-era stay-behind operations in general and about the origins of the 1953 coup.

The origins of Cold War stay-behind operations

The Cold War-era stay-behind operations in Europe largely grew out of World War II. The most elaborate wartime stay-behind operation was undertaken by Britain following the German conquest of France in June 1940. In response to German preparations for a cross-Channel invasion, Britain hastily developed a broad range of defenses inside its home territory, including secret paramilitary forces that would conduct armed resistance activity against German invaders. As the threat of a German invasion receded, Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) turned its attention to supporting resistance forces and undertaking its own paramilitary operations in continental Europe, as well as in North Africa and Southeast Asia. The US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) undertook similar activities in Europe and elsewhere. The Soviet Union also supported resistance forces, both in German-occupied Soviet territory and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. During the final months of the war, diehard Nazis established 'Werewolf' stay-behind networks to conduct guerrilla warfare against Allied occupation forces in Germany, though little came of this.³

As World War II ended and the Cold War emerged, many European leaders feared that the German occupation they had recently endured might soon be replaced by a Soviet invasion and occupation. During the final months of the war, officials in the Netherlands and Finland began to establish stay-behind capabilities to prepare for possible armed resistance against Soviet invasion forces. Partisan leaders in northeastern Italy made similar preparations for a possible invasion by Yugoslavia. In the following years, the governments of France, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, and Italy established stay-behind operations. Much of the organization, personnel, matériel, and strategy for these operations initially was drawn from the wartime resistance movements in these countries. Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or MI-6), which took over most of SOE's activities in 1946, assisted some of these networks and established similar stay-behind capabilities in Allied-occupied Austria and Germany and in Turkey. Even neutral Sweden and Switzerland established stay-behind networks during the Cold War.⁴

In 1948, Britain, France, and the Benelux countries created the Western European Union (WEU) to foster cooperation among themselves on defense and other matters. This organization established a committee to coordinate covert activities, including stay-behind operations. A group of Western European and North American countries then created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, which took over the WEU's military activities. NATO established a committee in 1951 to plan covert operations, including stay-behind operations, and a division to carry them out. However, the member governments maintained primary control over their own stay-behind operations.⁵

The United States was largely uninvolved in the early development of these European stay-behind operations, both because US covert operations capabilities were changing rapidly in this period and because US officials were still considering what role the United States should play in world affairs. The OSS was dismantled soon after World War II. Its covert operations apparatus was cut back sharply and reconstituted under two successive agencies before the CIA was created in 1947 and inherited it. Cold War tension grew rapidly in this era. Many US officials now believed the United States should use covert operations aggressively against the Soviet Union and its allies. The

National Security Council (NSC) took up the matter and in June 1948 produced policy paper NSC 10/2, which established guidelines for covert operations and created the autonomous Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) within the CIA to carry them out. Under NSC 10/2, stay-behind operations were considered a type of 'preventive direct action' – covert paramilitary operations undertaken in friendly or neutral countries in preparation for war. Also included in this category were preparations for covert sabotage, counter-sabotage, and the evacuation of US and allied personnel from conflict zones during wartime. Another category was 'political warfare', including covert paramilitary assistance to underground guerrilla movements in hostile countries. OPC provided extensive assistance of this sort in the following years to guerrillas in Eastern Europe and China, seeking to 'roll back' communist control in these regions. While stay-behind operations were preparatory and defensive, rollback operations supported guerrillas who were actively carrying out offensive operations against the Soviet Union and its allies.⁶

OPC's covert operations capabilities grew tremendously in the following years. Its budget increased from \$5 million in 1949 to \$82 million in 1952, while its personnel grew from 302 to 2,812. In addition to its rollback operations in Eastern Europe and China, OPC carried out extensive paramilitary operations in Korea after war broke out there in June 1950, including stay-behind operations. In early 1951, with Cold War tension peaking, OPC developed a 'strategic war plan' detailing how its various operations would be used to support the US armed forces if global war occurred. Its highest priority was 'retardation' efforts to slow the advance of Soviet forces. This would include efforts to foment guerrilla warfare by OPC's rollback and stay-behind forces in Eastern and Western Europe, blurring the distinction between rollback and stay-behind operations. If global war occurred, US military planners expected Soviet forces to attack not only Western Europe, but also the Middle East. The OPC war plan thus called for stay-behind operations in unidentified areas of the Middle East – Turkey and Iran, presumably – and for plans to sabotage oil facilities to deny them to the Soviets. The NSC updated its guidelines for covert operations in NSC 10/5, partly to incorporate these war-related activities. OPC was merged fully into the CIA in August 1952, creating a single unit with responsibility for covert operations, the Directorate of Plans, which subsequently oversaw stay-behind and rollback operations. The CIA continued to update its plans for wartime operations, even after Cold War tension eased following the Korean War armistice.⁷

The European stay-behind networks remained largely intact and linked to NATO through the 1980s. The CIA presumably maintained connections with many of these networks, but little information is available about this. In 1990, with the Cold War ending, Italian officials publicly revealed the existence of Italy's stay-behind network, codenamed 'Gladio', and produced a detailed report about it. This created considerable controversy and was followed by similar revelations and studies by other European governments and by journalists and scholars. Some of these studies developed elaborate conspiracy theories about the 'Gladio' networks, arguing that the CIA and NATO used them to support rightist 'secret armies' that carried out terrorist attacks in Europe, or that the CIA, the Vatican, and Mafia families used them to undertake terrorism, attack leftists, and smuggle drugs. Although these latter studies have been discredited, it is certainly possible that stay-behind networks may have become involved in domestic politics or other internal matters in some countries.⁸

The origins of the stay-behind operation in Iran

The US stay-behind operation in Iran also had origins in World War II. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, many German citizens and at least three German intelligence officers were living in Iran. After Britain and the Soviet Union invaded and occupied Iran in August 1941, these officers went underground and established secret networks to assist the German war effort. One of these networks was based in Isfahan and led by Franz Meyer, who worked with Qashqai tribal leaders and the local military governor, General Fazlollah Zahedi. British forces arrested Meyer, Zahedi, and others in August 1943. Another network was led by Julius Schulze-Holthus,

who also worked with Qashqai leaders and went into hiding in Qashqai territory, where he established drop zones and landing strips. As the German war effort faltered, Qashqai leaders decided to cooperate with the Allies and turned over Schulze-Holthus to British forces in March 1944. These German efforts accomplished little.⁹

US diplomats and military personnel monitored the Qashqai and wrote a series of reports about them during World War II. They knew the Qashqai were well-armed and were collaborating with the Germans. In August 1943, the head of the US legation in Iran, Louis Dreyfus, met with a Qashqai leader, Khosrow Khan Qashqai, who explained the Qashqais' concerns and declared that he was 'an admirer of Americans and all things American'. This began a long, close relationship between US officials and Qashqai leaders. When they met again in October 1943, Khosrow Khan asked Dreyfus to intercede with the British, who were pressing the Qashqai to disarm and turn over the German operatives. Dreyfus suggested that they give up the Germans, and Khosrow Khan agreed to do so. In August 1944, another US official reported that the Qashqai had established an alliance with the nearby Bakhtiari and Khamseh tribes, alarming Iranian officials.¹⁰

During the final months of World War II, it became increasingly clear that the Soviets would not withdraw their occupation forces from northern Iran within 6 months of the war's end, as promised. The Soviets also began to support Azeri and Kurdish separatist movements in Iran's northwestern Azerbaijan province. At the same time, the Soviet-allied Tudeh Party was expanding its activities, especially in Khuzestan province and in Isfahan, west and north of Qashqai territory. These developments created growing tension. Qashqai leaders told US embassy officials in February 1945 that they strongly opposed the Tudeh and would 'fight it to the death'. In November, Vice Consul John Jernegan visited Qashqai territory for several days. He reported that Qashqai leaders distrusted and feared the Soviets even more than they did the British and the Iranian government. They told him they hoped the United States would prevent the British and Soviets from dominating Iran. Jernegan surmised that this was why they had been trying to 'cultivate' US officials. The Qashqai and their allies together could field some 50,000 armed fighters. Jernegan believed they could defeat any effort by the Iranian army to subdue them, though they hoped to avoid conflict and were focused on winning seats in the upcoming parliamentary elections.¹¹

The Soviets finally withdrew their forces in May 1946 but continued to support the Azeri and Kurdish separatist movements. Tudeh influence also continued to grow. Qashqai leaders told US officials in May 1946 that the Tudeh were their 'mortal enemies' and they were considering staging an uprising against the Tudeh and perhaps even marching on Tehran. US officials discouraged this. The Tudeh then organized strikes among oil workers in Khuzestan, producing riots that left dozens dead. In late July, Qashqai leaders told US officials they intended to fight Tudeh and Soviet influence, and they reaffirmed their friendship toward the United States. The Qashqai then led a major tribal uprising in the south in September, aimed at weakening the Tudeh and persuading the central government to resist Tudeh and Soviet pressure. This uprising apparently was backed by Britain, which controlled Iran's oil industry, had long-standing ties with Bakhtiari and other southern tribes, and planned to establish a 'southern breakaway state' based on these tribes to protect the oil industry if a major crisis occurred. The uprising ended when Qashqai leaders negotiated an agreement with the central government in mid-October. Government forces then carried out a major crackdown on the Tudeh and crushed the Azeri and Kurdish separatist movements.¹²

Following the collapse of the separatist movements, Iranian military commanders began planning a major operation to disarm the Qashqai and other tribes, which had seized large quantities of arms during the September uprising. Qashqai leaders threatened to launch a 'full scale civil war' in response. They told the US ambassador they were determined to resist the army and were backed by other tribes, including not only their southern allies, but also Kurdish and Shahsevan tribes in Azerbaijan. In late March, they agreed to give up some arms in exchange for concessions from the government, defusing the crisis. However, considerable tension remained between the Qashqai

and the government. US embassy officials had facilitated this agreement, deepening their ties with the Qashqai.¹³

US officials were increasingly concerned about Soviet intentions toward Iran during this period. In October 1946, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) concluded that Iran was of 'major strategic interest' to the United States because of its location between the Soviet Union and Persian Gulf oilfields and because bases in Iran would be helpful for attacks on Soviet oil and industrial facilities if global war occurred. However, the Soviets had large army units based just north of Iran that could easily invade. In mid-1947, US military planners determined that the United States could not provide enough assistance to Iran at this time to enable it to resist a Soviet invasion. Thus, despite Iran's importance, the United States could not prevent the Soviets from conquering it. This dilemma vexed US policy toward Iran until the mid-1950s, when a large US military aid program and Iran's entry into the Baghdad Pact reduced its vulnerability.¹⁴

In light of this dilemma, US officials undertook several initiatives during this period to mitigate the effects of a Soviet invasion. They reauthorized two US military advisory missions in Iran and sold Iran surplus military equipment. In January 1948, the NSC directed the JCS to make plans to destroy Middle Eastern oil facilities in the event of a Soviet invasion. This project continued in the following years, with the United States and Britain developing joint plans to demolish refineries and other facilities in Iran and nearby countries. In October 1947, US officials in Washington directed the US embassy and US advisory missions in Iran to develop plans to evacuate their personnel if the Soviets invaded or if some other crisis occurred.¹⁵

Another such initiative was an effort to determine how various Iranian tribes might react to a Soviet invasion. In October 1947, the State Department directed the Tehran embassy to examine the military potential of Kurdish tribes. CIA officer John Waller studied the situation and concluded that the Shikkak Kurds and smaller tribes allied with them probably would fight Soviet invaders if armed by the government, while the Jalali Kurds probably would back the Soviets. Soviet-backed Iraqi Barzani Kurds entered Iran in late 1947 and met with Jalali leaders. A Soviet radio station began broadcasting inflammatory material into Azerbaijan in various Kurdish and Turkic dialects. Fifteen Kurdish-speaking Soviet operatives entered Iran and began to agitate. Another Soviet operative met with Qashqai and Boir Ahmadi leaders and offered them weapons. US officials also believed the Soviets had influence among the Pishvanlu Turkoman tribe of northeastern Iran, certain Arab tribes in Khuzestan, and Iran's Armenian and Assyrian communities. The Tudeh Party and its affiliates remained the Soviets' main Iranian allies and presumably would support a Soviet invasion as well.¹⁶

Iran's leaders also were deeply concerned about a possible Soviet invasion and tribal reactions. Iran's monarch, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and armed forces Chief of Staff Ali Razmara feared the Soviets and began to relax their efforts to disarm the Qashqai and other tribes in November 1947. By the end of the year, the army had resolved its differences with most tribes and wanted to develop them into a 'semi-organized army reserve' that would back the army in the event of war. Toward this end, it sent officers to live with and organize various tribes and began to provide arms to Shahsevan tribes under a licensing arrangement. The army and certain tribal units even began working together against 'irregulars' crossing the Soviet border. The Qashqai, after years of tension, agreed to disarm and allowed an army company to relocate to Firuzabad, their effective capital. In April 1948, the US embassy learned that the army was providing the Qashqai more weapons than they had given up under this disarmament program. By October, the army had dramatically improved its relations with various tribes and was rearming them and integrating them into its defense plans. Iranian officials also offered to help settle the tribes and expand educational opportunities for them.¹⁷

As these events transpired, and with stay-behind operations underway in Europe, initiatives emerged both in Washington and in the Tehran embassy to develop US stay-behind capabilities in Iran. In April 1948, the NSC produced a draft report calling for the United States, in conjunction with Britain, to consider providing military assistance to Iran to improve its ability to conduct delaying operations and armed resistance in the event of a Soviet invasion. It also called for the

United States to consider undertaking 'special operations', a euphemism for covert operations, to assist Iran in these efforts.¹⁸

At the same time, Vice Consul Gerald Dooher of the Tehran embassy wrote a report proposing that the United States develop plans to support a 'free government' in Iran that would lead stay-behind resistance in the event of a Soviet invasion or communist coup. The free government would be centered around the shah and backed by remnants of the Iranian army and Qashqai, Bakhtiari, Lur, and certain Kurdish tribal forces. It would operate in the Zagros mountain region inhabited by these tribes, which stretches from the Iraqi border above Kermanshah southeastward toward the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Dooher suggested that the headquarters of this free government should be at Firuzabad, in Qashqai territory. The main benefit for the United States would be that these forces might prevent communist forces from occupying Iran's oil-producing region, southwest of the Zagros, though Dooher acknowledged that Soviet invaders could easily seize this region. He also acknowledged that foreign support for resistance forces might lead to civil war in Iran, as in Spain a decade earlier.¹⁹

US Ambassador John Wiley had several conversations with the shah in the following months about a possible Soviet invasion. The shah stated that he would prefer to remain in Iran to lead resistance against Soviet invaders, rather than establish a government-in-exile abroad. In August, Wiley explained the shah's position in a telegram to Washington and forwarded a copy of Dooher's proposal. This material made its way to George Kennan, head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, who was the chief architect both of US containment strategy and of the US decision to undertake covert paramilitary operations against the Soviet Union. Kennan endorsed Dooher's proposal and suggested that it be forwarded to the Defense Department and CIA for consideration. He also suggested that US officials discuss the matter with British officials. In early November, the State Department directed the Tehran embassy to gather more information regarding Dooher's proposal.²⁰

In October 1948, Wiley and Dooher visited the Qashqai, who explained their plans to resist a Soviet invasion. They also met with the local army commander, who told them the army was stockpiling arms and ammunition nearby for use against a Soviet invasion. Dooher then wrote a report about how the Qashqai and nearby tribes could contribute to US stay-behind plans. He reported that the Qashqai could provide 60,000 fighters and 35,000 horses, while other nearby tribes could provide at least 47,000 additional fighters. These fighters were adequately armed for the early stages of resistance but would need communications and medical equipment, antitank weapons, and ammunition resupply in the longer term. He also provided details on the Qashqai semiannual migration schedule and on six airfields, two parachute drop sites, and the Persian Gulf port of Naband, through which these forces could be supplied. A US military attaché, Colonel William Sexton, endorsed Dooher's report and stated that these tribal forces might be able to hold out indefinitely against Soviet invaders. The embassy also forwarded a report from the Tabriz consulate stating that the Kurdish tribes would be less reliable than the southern tribes in resisting a Soviet invasion.²¹

The embassy continued to develop plans to evacuate its staff and other Americans from Iran, which overlapped with this stay-behind planning. US military attachés examined several possible overland evacuation routes. The best of these terminated in the Persian Gulf port of Bushehr, where Qashqai and other friendly tribal forces could provide protection. They also made arrangements for air evacuation via the US airbase in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Ambassador Wiley suggested that money, vehicles, and certain supplies be pre-positioned for use in an evacuation and that the evacuation plan be linked to the stay-behind plan. Washington later sent three large trucks, gold coins, and US currency to Iran for this purpose.²²

The State Department and the Tehran embassy had a few additional minor exchanges about stay-behind planning in the following months. However, after early 1949, documentation on this topic largely disappears from the State Department records publicly available at the US National Archives, presumably because stay-behind operations were transferred to OPC after it was established in September 1948.²³

The NSC completed its first major policy paper on Iran in July 1949. This paper, NSC 54, discussed Iran's strategic importance and sketched several dire contingencies that might occur there in the near future, including the establishment of a 'pro-Soviet puppet government', a full-scale Soviet invasion, and a more limited Soviet invasion of Azerbaijan or other northern areas. It then authorized a stay-behind operation to respond to these contingencies.²⁴

Implementing the stay-behind operation

By early 1949, the Iranian armed forces had fully incorporated stay-behind activity into its strategic plans. If the Soviets invaded, Iran's army would fall back to the Zagros mountains, where it continued to have good relations with the Qashqai and other tribes and had pre-positioned stockpiles of military equipment. The shah planned to relocate to Kazerun, between Qashqai and Bakhtiari territory, where he could lead resistance without depending solely on the Qashqai, whose leaders he did not fully trust. US military planners expected half of Iran's 150,000-man army to be destroyed in an initial Soviet thrust. The remainder would withdraw to the Zagros region, where it would undertake guerrilla activity in conjunction with tribal forces and await whatever US or British assistance might materialize. The army continued to arm the Shahsevan and other northern tribes, which also would harass Soviet forces.²⁵

The US military aid program in Iran was tailored to support this strategy, providing the army with demolition equipment and training and antitank weapons to help it slow a Soviet invasion. This would facilitate the army's withdrawal to the Zagros and give Iranian, US, and British forces more time to organize the defense or destruction of Iran's oil facilities. It is not clear what else the United States did in 1949 and 1950 to strengthen stay-behind capabilities in Iran. However, US officials did not arm the Qashqai in this period, fearing that this would undermine the authority of the Tehran government and the shah and that the Qashqai might pursue their own tribal interests rather than defend Iran if the Soviets invaded. By December 1950, the Iranian army was much better equipped than the Qashqai and other tribes, due mainly to the US military aid program. The US embassy reported that the army by this time was capable of suppressing a separate uprising by Kurds, Bakhtiari, or any other tribal group except the Qashqai, which had the strongest tribal forces in Iran.²⁶

Soviet-backed North Korean forces suddenly invaded South Korea in June 1950. US officials were deeply concerned that a new era of Soviet aggression had begun and that Soviet forces now might invade Iran, perhaps triggering a third world war. Accordingly, they undertook several studies of military conditions affecting Iran. The Soviets had 290,000 troops based in the Caucasus and eight additional divisions east of the Caspian that could invade Iran without warning, supported by 450–500 tactical aircraft. Although Iran's armed forces were capable of maintaining internal security short of widespread tribal rebellion or sabotage, they would quickly 'disintegrate' under a major invasion. Remnants of the army and tribal forces could slow the initial Soviet thrust and might be able to carry out guerrilla warfare against Soviet occupiers indefinitely. However, advance units of the Soviet army could reach the Tigris-Euphrates Valley and the Persian Gulf within a few days, and Soviet forces could establish control over all of Iran within 45–50 days.²⁷

With Cold War tensions peaking, and with OPC now growing rapidly, the CIA increased its presence in Iran. It had sent a second officer, Roger Goiran, to Tehran in 1948 to head the CIA station. Goiran and John Waller were not OPC officers, and neither worked directly on the stay-behind operation. The CIA sent five more officers to Iran in 1950 and early 1951, including three OPC paramilitary specialists. These paramilitary officers worked on the stay-behind operation, though it is not clear when this began. They also developed 'escape and evasion' plans under which they established safe houses, identified water sources, pre-positioned supplies, and drew up maps for use by downed US air crews or other US or allied personnel fleeing a war or other crises. These escape and evasion plans were closely linked to the stay-behind operation and presumably also to the embassy's evacuation plans, discussed above.²⁸

By early 1951, a powerful movement had emerged in Iran calling for nationalization of the oil industry, which was controlled by a British corporation. US officials feared this movement might destabilize Iran, perhaps enabling the Tudeh to seize power or giving the Soviets an excuse to invade. These concerns grew sharply after a radical Islamist assassinated Prime Minister Ali Razmara in March 1951. US officials had worked closely with Razmara on stay-behind planning and other matters and were alarmed by his death.

With unrest growing, the NSC developed a new policy paper on Iran, designated NSC 107 and approved on 21 March 1951. NSC 107 went beyond NSC 54 in calling for the United States to undertake 'special political operations' in Iran, including not only stay-behind activity, but also efforts to 'counter possible communist subversion in Iran' and 'effect Iranian alignment with the free world'. This language provided authorization for several CIA covert operations in Iran in the following years. NSC 107 specified that these covert operations should be planned and conducted in conjunction with Britain. Similar language was included in NSC 107/2, which superseded NSC 107 in June 1951. NSC 107/2 also called for the United States to support any British forces deployed in southern Iran at the request of the Iranian government in response to 'a seizure or a clearly imminent seizure of power by Iranian Communists'.²⁹

A week after NSC 107 was approved, CIA Deputy Director Allen Dulles wrote a memo to CIA Director Walter Bedell Smith explaining the CIA covert operations already underway in Iran and suggesting how they might be expanded. This memo indicated that the CIA had already begun to develop stay-behind capabilities in Iran and was prepared to expand these capabilities. Within a few weeks, OPC's Near East operations chief, Kermit Roosevelt, was told to develop a strategic plan for covert operations in Iran. OPC then sent a task force to Iran to examine the prospects for an 'emergency program' there. In the following months, OPC developed proposals for two covert operations in Iran: one that would develop escape and evasion and stay-behind capabilities, and another that would 'back individuals and groups in an endeavor to produce an organized and directed attack upon the Communists in Iran'. The first proposal called for sending OPC personnel to the Qashqai region to establish ties with Qashqai leaders, evaluate the tribes' potential for guerrilla warfare, and develop escape and evasion networks, safe houses, drop zones, and other capabilities. The second proposal was for the CIA's TPBEDAMN operation, under which a wide range of anti-communist propaganda and political action activities were carried out in the following years. These proposals were approved in early August 1951. Two Qashqai leaders visited the United States in June, reiterating their friendship but also stating that they strongly supported Prime Minister Mosaddeq.³⁰

In the next few months, OPC personnel began to implement the escape and evasion and stay-behind plans. They conducted field surveys by air and road for escape and evasion routes. They worked out formal agreements with Qashqai leaders to provide intelligence, assist with escape and evasion, undertake sabotage, and establish resistance forces for use in wartime. They also apparently provided weapons to the Qashqai. In addition, OPC officers held preliminary discussions with British officials about these matters. The British implemented their own stay-behind operation in Iran, appointing Christopher Montague Woodhouse to head SIS operations there. Woodhouse had worked with Greek resistance forces during World War II and later developed stay-behind capabilities in central Europe. He oversaw the British stay-behind operation in Iran, as discussed below.³¹

Little progress had occurred on the US stay-behind operation by mid-1952. In April 1952, Roosevelt noted that the CIA was not authorized to undertake large-scale stay-behind planning until some unexplained changes were made to NSC 107/2. In July, he stated that the CIA was 'encountering difficulties in getting under way' with its activities in the Qashqai region. It is not clear what these difficulties were.³²

In July 1952, Mosaddeq suddenly resigned as prime minister in a dispute with the shah. This sparked massive pro-Mosaddeq demonstrations that soon turned violent, leaving dozens dead and leading parliament to reinstate Mosaddeq. The Tudeh had helped organize the demonstrations and remained very active in the following weeks. US officials were deeply alarmed by these events,

concluding that 'the loss of Iran to the free world is a distinct possibility'. They considered various options to prevent this, ranging from giving Mosaddeq emergency economic aid to organizing a coup against him. They soon decided to continue supporting Mosaddeq and undertake a new effort to resolve the ongoing oil dispute between Iran and Britain.³³

Among the options US officials considered at this time was an initiative to expand the stay-behind operation for use against a possible Tudeh effort to seize power. On July 30, Secretary of State Dean Acheson directed the CIA to establish stockpiles of arms and other supplies somewhere near Iran and make plans to undertake 'unconventional activities' with the Qashqai, Bakhtiari, and other friendly forces if necessary to prevent a Tudeh takeover. State Department officials emphasized that they were authorizing the CIA to prepare, but not to implement, these activities and that the tribes should not be informed about them at this time. They directed the CIA to procure arms from the Defense Department for these stockpiles.³⁴ Although this initiative was based on the CIA's existing stay-behind operation, its goal was to prevent an Iranian political faction, the Tudeh Party, from gaining or consolidating power. This initiative thus called for the CIA to prepare to intervene directly in Iran's internal affairs, albeit against a Soviet-backed actor.

The State Department also directed the CIA to develop joint plans with SIS for this initiative. CIA officials, therefore, met with their British counterparts in early August and were told, without explanation, that the Foreign Office opposed such a joint initiative at this time. The British certainly did not oppose stay-behind activity to counter a Soviet invasion of Iran. Indeed, SIS station chief Woodhouse provided weapons for stay-behind activity both to Bakhtiari tribes and to unidentified tribes in the north soon after these events, and he later met several times with CIA officials to discuss stay-behind plans. The British may have rejected the CIA's approach because they were trying to overthrow Mosaddeq at this time, as discussed below, and therefore, did not want to arm the Qashqai, who supported Mosaddeq.³⁵

CIA officials developed a 25-page plan for the expanded stay-behind initiative, which was approved on August 28. Unfortunately, the main details of this plan remain classified. Even before the plan was approved, CIA personnel had begun to procure weapons and ammunition and establish stockpiles near Iran. By late October, 'limited' stockpiles were in place. In an October 22 meeting with his British counterparts, a State Department official stated that this plan would be implemented only after a Tudeh takeover because doing so earlier might give the Tudeh an excuse to stage a coup. CIA officials acknowledged that a Tudeh takeover would severely disrupt CIA operations in Iran, though some CIA personnel might remain operational and perhaps undertake 'sporadic terrorist activity against Tudeh leaders' and other actions. A Tudeh takeover probably would increase the tribes' desire for US assistance. Stay-behind activity would be more successful if remnants of the Iranian army and government remained intact and withdrew to southern Iran, if US military advisory personnel continued to work with Iranian army remnants, and if the United States could establish a military base in Iraq, which was under consideration at this time. However, CIA officials acknowledged that covert stay-behind activity alone probably could not overthrow a Tudeh government.³⁶

In October 1952, CIA analysts produced a Special Estimate which concluded that the Tudeh 'almost certainly' was incapable of seizing power at this time. Two versions of a National Intelligence Estimate produced in November and January reached the same conclusion and reiterated that a Soviet invasion of Iran was unlikely. These estimates each reflected the consensus of the US intelligence community.³⁷

In December 1952, the US Army produced a detailed analysis of Iran's military capabilities. Iran's war plans continued to call for withdrawal to the Zagros mountains if the Soviets invaded. The Iranian army had considered demolishing certain railway tunnels that Soviet invaders might use but had made few preparations for this, so it could delay a Soviet invasion 'only slightly'. No more than 25,000 army personnel were likely to reach the Zagros redoubt areas. These forces would be very disorganized and would lack essential supplies and equipment. The tribes could provide perhaps 50,000 skilled guerrilla fighters, though they were no match for a modern army. It was

doubtful they would cooperate with the Iranian army, but they might cooperate with Western forces if given enough arms and money.³⁸

During the fall of 1952, the NSC revised NSC 107/2 to update its guidance on US policy toward Iran. The new policy paper, NSC 136/1, called for US officials to draw up plans for military, economic, diplomatic, psychological, and 'special' measures to support a non-communist government if communists tried to seize power in Iran. It also called for preparations to implement stay-behind resistance activity under these circumstances. And, in language that evoked US efforts to 'roll back' communist regimes in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, it declared that the United States should 'make every feasible effort, particularly through special political operations, to ... harass, undermine, and if possible ... overthrow [a] communist government' if one gained control over Iran. NSC 136/1 dropped much of its predecessor's language about working with Britain to plan and conduct stay-behind activity and other covert operations, calling merely for liaison with Britain on these matters. President Truman approved NSC 136/1 on 20 November 1952.³⁹

As US officials were weighing these considerations, Britain backed two loosely related plots against Mosaddeq. The first was led by retired general Fazlollah Zahedi. Mosaddeq learned of this plot and, in mid-October, had several Zahedi allies arrested and broke diplomatic relations with Britain. In the following weeks, a second plot emerged involving Abol Qassem Bakhtiari, a Bakhtiari tribal leader with close ties to Britain and to Zahedi. Abol Qassem wanted to unite the two main branches of the Bakhtiari and lead them in an uprising against the Mosaddeq government aimed at establishing an independent 'Free South in Iran', not unlike the British 'southern breakaway state'. Rumors circulated that Abol Qassem was receiving financial support from Britain and weapons from an unknown source – perhaps Britain's SIS. In January 1953, allies of Abol Qassem approached US officials at the Isfahan consulate and the Tehran embassy, asking for arms and other support and saying they wanted to prevent a Tudeh takeover. US officials refused to provide support or encouragement.⁴⁰

Abol Qassem and his allies staged a minor uprising in Bakhtiari territory in mid-February 1953, which government forces quickly suppressed. This helped catalyze a serious confrontation between Mosaddeq and the shah in late February, with Zahedi and other Mosaddeq opponents backing the shah. US officials were deeply alarmed by this Bakhtiari opposition to Mosaddeq and by the events of late February, seeing them as evidence that Mosaddeq's coalition was collapsing and a Tudeh takeover was becoming increasingly likely. These issues were discussed at two NSC meetings in early March in which the Eisenhower administration moved toward authorizing a coup against Mosaddeq.⁴¹

Also in March 1953, a US interagency working group produced a fascinating progress report on NSC 136/1 which detailed a contingency plan consisting of military, economic, diplomatic, psychological, and 'special' measures the United States could implement to try to prevent a communist seizure of power in Iran. The military measures included conducting shows of force over Iranian airspace, providing military aid to a non-communist rump government and to unspecified nearby countries, and sending US military units to Iraq and Turkey if necessary to prevent the further spread of communism. In a separate memo, the JCS cautioned against sending US forces directly into Iran, which might provoke Soviet military intervention; and it stated that these military measures alone were not likely to bring down a communist government in Iran, though they would facilitate CIA efforts to do so. The progress report also called for economic aid to a rump government and various diplomatic measures, including withholding US recognition of a communist government, efforts to encourage anti-communist opposition, and appeals for the United Nations, Britain, and Iran's neighbors to support the anti-communist opposition.⁴²

The centerpiece of the contingency plan was a set of psychological and 'special' operations aimed at preventing or reversing a communist takeover. These operations had become the main focus of the CIA's Iran operations branch by this time. They included adapting the CIA's TPBEDAMN operation to counter an attempted communist takeover. They also included a major buildup of the CIA's stay-behind capabilities. CIA officers had reached an agreement with Qashqai leaders to

provide 20,000 tribal guerrillas and had stockpiled enough matériel to equip 14,000 guerrillas for 6 months, as noted above. This was a force roughly comparable in size to the one the Qashqai had led in their 1946 uprising. The stockpiles of matériel were located in New Jersey, at a US base in Libya, and at a British base in Egypt; they could be transported to Iran within 4 weeks. CIA officers were establishing reception points for this matériel in southern Iran, Tehran, and Tabriz. In addition to the Qashqai and their allies, the CIA had other, unidentified stay-behind assets that could undertake small-scale resistance activity and provide intelligence on conditions inside Iran. CIA personnel had provided radio equipment and training to 10 Iranians who would be located throughout the country, and they had established caches of gold and cash for stay-behind activity. The CIA planned to establish eight three-man teams to supply, train, and oversee the stay-behind forces. US officials were considering plans to evacuate the shah during a Tudeh takeover to serve as an anti-communist 'rallying point'. And they had arranged with British officials to approach a prominent Iranian they could work with 'to preserve the vestiges of a free government'. Inexplicably, they were considering both Mosaddeq and Zahedi for this role. The stay-behind operation was focused mainly on resisting a Tudeh takeover by this time. Indeed, none of the documents detailing these preparations even mention the possibility of a Soviet invasion.⁴³

The end of the stay-behind operation

After March 1953, US officials abandoned both the stay-behind operation and the broader contingency plan, for two main reasons. First, at some point during this month the Eisenhower administration authorized the CIA to begin planning the coup against Mosaddeq that occurred in August 1953. The purpose of the coup was to replace the faltering Mosaddeq regime with one led by a strong figure, Fazlollah Zahedi, who would prevent a Tudeh takeover. After the coup, Zahedi carried out a harsh crackdown that severely damaged the Tudeh. Consequently, Eisenhower's decision to authorize a coup and the subsequent success of the coup largely obviated both the stay-behind operation and the broader contingency plan.⁴⁴

Second, the stay-behind operation was based mainly on cooperation with the Qashqai leaders. However, as discussed above, the Qashqai had uneasy relations with the shah and the Iranian army, and they supported Mosaddeq. Moreover, despite their support for Mosaddeq, the Qashqai began plotting with Acting Minister of Court Abol Qassem Amini and his brother, Gendarmerie commander Mahmoud Amini, in May 1953. The aim of the Amini-Qashqai plot is not entirely clear, but US officials thought it was directed against both Mosaddeq and the shah. US Ambassador to Iran Loy Henderson and CIA station chief Goiran both recommended in early June that the United States back the Amini-Qashqai plot, presumably because they believed it offered better prospects for suppressing the Tudeh than a plot with Zahedi. However, Roosevelt and other CIA officials distrusted the Aminis and the Qashqai leaders because they did not strongly support the shah and because Qashqai tribesmen apparently had looted some stay-behind weapons and money by this time. They decided not to support the Amini-Qashqai plot and worked to 'neutralize' it by maintaining close contact with its leaders and trying to determine their plans and capabilities, while actually backing Zahedi against Mosaddeq.⁴⁵

After Mosaddeq was overthrown, Roosevelt favored 'fairly drastic action' against the Qashqai. The Zahedi government soon began a campaign to undermine the Qashqai leaders by fostering divisions among the Qashqai tribes and between the Qashqai and their tribal allies. During the next few years, Zahedi and the shah forced the Qashqai leaders into exile, confiscated their land, disarmed their tribal forces, and made various efforts to settle the Qashqai. The United States backed these initiatives and refused the Qashqai leaders' requests for assistance.⁴⁶ Under these circumstances, neither the CIA nor the Iranian armed forces could continue working with the Qashqai on stay-behind activity.

In late 1953, the shah began pressing US officials for a military aid package large enough to enable Iran's armed forces to develop strong defensive delaying capabilities against a Soviet

invasion, which would further obviate stay-behind activity. US officials favored this idea; and they wanted Iran to join a military alliance with other countries in the 'northern tier' of the Middle East to help contain the Soviet Union. However, they believed no real progress could be made on these goals until an agreement was reached to sell Iranian oil, providing revenue that could help finance the necessary military buildup. A new policy paper on Iran, NSC 5402 of January 1954, spelled out these goals and emphasized the need for an oil agreement. It also retained much of the language in NSC 136/1 authorizing stay-behind preparations.⁴⁷

Iran signed a new oil agreement in October 1954, providing a revenue stream that grew rapidly in the following years. The NSC produced a new set of policy guidelines for Iran, NSC 5504, in January 1955. NSC 5504 called for increased US military aid to Iran to help it develop defensive delaying capabilities. It also directed US officials to encourage Iran to join the Baghdad Pact, which occurred in November 1955. Iran's military capabilities, therefore, grew rapidly in the following years, further reducing the need for a stay-behind operation. NSC 5504 scaled back its predecessors' language on how the United States should respond to a Tudeh takeover or Soviet invasion, calling for diplomatic and military measures but saying nothing about stay-behind activity.⁴⁸ The CIA's stay-behind operation may have continued in some limited capacity in the following years, but no further documentation on it is publicly available. The Iranian army may perhaps have continued stay-behind activity of some sort as well.

Conclusions

The US stay-behind operation in Iran was similar in many ways to the contemporary stay-behind operations in Europe but also differed from them in significant ways. The differences provide interesting insight into how stay-behind operations functioned.

One difference is that the stay-behind operation in Iran was based mainly on tribal forces, rather than on veterans of wartime resistance movements. The Qashqai and other Iranian tribes were important political actors, pursuing their own agendas. This meant they were less reliable to their sponsors than professionally organized stay-behind forces, as US officials learned when tensions emerged between the Qashqai and the shah, when the Qashqai backed Mosaddeq and plotted with the Aminis, and when Qashqai tribesmen apparently looted stay-behind matériel. Doubts about the Qashqais' reliability led US officials to manage the stay-behind operation in ways that undermined its effectiveness, stockpiling most stay-behind matériel abroad rather than in Iran, keeping from the Qashqai the changes in the operation made in July–August 1952, and eventually breaking with the Qashqai over their support for Mosaddeq. Stay-behind operations, therefore, probably were more effective when they were based on apolitical professionals rather than political actors.

Another difference involves US cooperation with Britain on stay-behind activity. The two allies seem to have cooperated fairly closely on stay-behind operations in Europe. However, as discussed above, the British declined to undertake a joint stay-behind operation in Iran in August 1952; and they apparently used their own stay-behind capabilities to try to overthrow Mosaddeq in the following months, when the United States was still backing him. These actions created tension between US and British officials, as reflected in the language of NSC 136/1. And Britain's subversive activity added to the growing turmoil in Iran during this period, which US officials believed was helping the Tudeh. Thus the conflicting agendas of the United States and Britain not only precluded cooperation on stay-behind activity for several months, but also may have undermined the central goal of this activity: to prevent a Tudeh takeover. Stay-behind operations undoubtedly were more effective when their sponsors were cooperating rather than working at cross-purposes.

A third difference is that the main focus of the US stay-behind operation in Iran changed fundamentally after July 1952, from resisting a Soviet invasion to intervening against a Tudeh takeover. As discussed above, several now-discredited studies have charged that the CIA and NATO used stay-behind operations in Europe to support rightist terrorism, attack leftists, and smuggle drugs. This study shows that the US stay-behind operation in Iran evolved into an elaborate plan to

destabilize a prospective Tudeh government. Consequently, while some authors have charged that stay-behind operations in Europe amounted to blatant intervention in the internal affairs of the host countries, the stay-behind operation in Iran became a plan to do just that. While the goal of this intervention would have been to weaken the Tudeh's Soviet patrons, it might well have had a very adverse impact on Iran. Indeed, as noted above, one of its architects had warned that the stay-behind operation might trigger a civil war.

Finally, this study has important implications for our understanding of the evolution of US policy toward Iran during the Mosaddeq era. As explained above, the Truman administration's stay-behind operation became the centerpiece of a contingency plan to prevent or reverse a communist takeover in Iran, along with the military, economic, diplomatic, psychological, and other 'special' measures detailed in the progress report on NSC 136/1. As it was developing this approach, the Truman administration considered but rejected the idea of undertaking a coup against Mosaddeq, both in the aftermath of the July 1952 unrest and when British officials raised the idea in the fall of 1952.⁴⁹ The Eisenhower administration inherited Truman's contingency plan but chose instead to carry out a coup to replace Mosaddeq with a strong leader who would suppress Iran's communists. Consequently, the stay-behind operation and the broader contingency plan were Truman's alternative to a coup aimed at preventing a communist takeover. Clearly the Truman and Eisenhower administrations pursued very different approaches toward Iran in this period, contrary to what some scholars have argued.⁵⁰

A key difference between the two approaches is that while Truman's plan called for extensive intervention in Iran's internal affairs – launching a major tribal uprising and other measures – this was to occur only in reaction to a Tudeh attempt to seize power, which very likely would have been backed and perhaps instigated by the Soviet Union. Eisenhower's approach was preemptive, with intervention ensured once a decision had been made to carry out a coup – well before a Tudeh effort to seize power, and irrespective of Soviet actions. And the intervention that did occur under Eisenhower's approach certainly was extensive: the 1953 coup replaced Mosaddeq's semi-democratic regime with a harsh authoritarian regime, and it created anti-American sentiment in Iran that later grew and caused severe problems for the United States. Truman's approach was reactive and thus would have avoided these outcomes unless the Tudeh actually had tried to seize power.

Why did Eisenhower choose to carry out a coup, rather than continue with Truman's contingency plan? The answer to this question lies beyond the scope of this study. However, the Truman administration certainly was not averse to covert intervention in Iran's internal affairs, as we have seen.⁵¹ And while Truman's plan might have failed to stop a Tudeh effort to seize power and might even have plunged Iran into civil war, a coup against Mosaddeq also was very risky and might have led to civil war. Indeed, the CIA's first attempt to overthrow Mosaddeq on 15–16 August failed, producing 3 days of chaos in Iran before its second attempt succeeded. So Eisenhower's approach was not necessarily more likely to succeed than Truman's approach. Finally, there was no dramatic increase in the severity of the communist threat in Iran during this period.⁵² Thus a coup was not the only viable approach US officials could pursue at this time to prevent a Tudeh takeover, and it remains unclear precisely why the Eisenhower administration chose this approach.

Notes

1. CIA, "Project Outline"; NSC, *First Progress Report*.
2. This volume is available at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951-54Iran>. The main previous account of the stay-behind operation is a brief description in Gasiorowski, "CIA's TPBEDAMN Operation."
3. Atkin, *Fighting Nazi Occupation*; Mawdsley, "Anti-German Insurgency"; and Biddiscombe, *The Last Nazis*.
4. Nuti and Riste, "Introduction"; Riste, "Stay Behind."
5. Riste, "Stay Behind."
6. Ibid.; Long, *CIA and the Soviet Bloc*; NSC, *NSC 10/2*; and Memo from Wisner to Hillenkoetter.

7. Long, *CIA and the Soviet Bloc*, 201–202; “12. Editorial Note”; OPC, “CIA/OPC Strategic War Plan”; NSC, *NSC 10/5*; CIA, “Status of Planning.” The CIA also carried out stay-behind operations in China in 1948. See Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 148.
8. Nuti, “Italian ‘Stay-Behind’ Network”; Ganser, *NATO’s Secret Armies*; Williams, *Operation Gladio*; and Kwitney, “The CIA’s Secret Armies.” A stay-behind network was even established in Alaska in the 1950s. See Harper, “Alaskans Trained.”
9. O’Sullivan, *Nazi Secret Warfare*. Germany undertook similar operations in Iran during World War I. See Hopkirk, *Like Hidden Fire*, chs. 7, 11.
10. Tehran Legation Dispatches 616, 337, 647, 700, and 8.
11. Tehran Embassy Dispatches 217 and 141. On Soviet and Tudeh activities during this period, see Gasiorowski, “US Perceptions.”
12. Tehran Embassy Dispatch 25; Basra Consulate Dispatch 36; Tehran Embassy Telegrams 1011, 1266, and 1258; Louis, “Britain and the Overthrow,” 163; and London Embassy Dispatch 2432. On earlier British ties with the Bakhtiari and other southern tribes, see Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*.
13. Tehran Embassy Dispatches 277 and 339; Tehran Embassy Telegram 145.
14. JCS, “The Joint Chiefs of Staff”; State Department Telegram 434 to the Tehran Embassy.
15. State Department Telegram 5; Tehran Embassy Telegram 22; JCS, *Preparations for Demolition*; Everly, “Top-Secret Cold War Plan”; and US Department of the Army, “Action of US Missions.”
16. Tehran Embassy Telegrams A-173, A-21, A-46, and 452; Tehran Embassy Dispatches A-182 and A-196; and CIA, “Soviet Activities in Iran.”
17. Tehran Embassy Telegrams A-167, A-190, A-196, 452; Tehran Embassy Dispatch 300.
18. Attachment to memo from Souers.
19. Attachment to Memo from Dooher. It is not clear whether the initiative behind Dooher’s proposal came from the Tehran embassy, from Washington, or from the shah.
20. Letter from Wiley to Jernegan, August 19, 1948; Memo from Merriam to Kennan; Memo from Satterthwaite to Kennan; and Letter from Satterthwaite to Wiley.
21. Tehran Embassy unnumbered dispatch; letter from Wilson to Jernegan, November 22, 1948. The reports by Dooher and Sexton are attached to the unnumbered dispatch, along with a report by John Waller on Qashqai-German collaboration during World War II.
22. Letter from Wiley to Jernegan, October 14, 1948; State Department Telegram 423; and Memo from Silver to Rountree.
23. Memo from Jernegan to Wilson; Letter from Jernegan to Wilson; letter from Wilson to Jernegan, January 21, 1949. In the second of these documents, Jernegan stated that an organization whose name he did not yet know – presumably OPC – now had primary responsibility for stay-behind planning. The last of these documents stated that CIA personnel in Iran were sending Washington recommendations on what type of communications equipment should be provided to Iranian stay-behind forces. In a cover letter attached to this document, Jernegan referred to stay-behind planning as “Operation JIBI,” which may have been its OPC codename.
24. NSC, *NSC 54*.
25. Memo of Conversation with His Imperial Majesty; Tehran Embassy Dispatch 107; Memo of Conversation, “The Shah’s Strategic Plan”; and Memo from McGhee to Matthews. The CIA sent Donald Wilber, who had served in Iran as an OSS officer during World War II, to inspect Iran’s stay-behind plans in 1949. See Wilber, *Adventures*, 156.
26. Memo from McGhee to Matthews; Tehran Embassy Dispatch 212; and Tehran Embassy Telegram 1352. US Supreme Court Justice William Douglas vacationed in the Qashqai and Bakhtiari regions in August 1950 and met with tribal leaders. He apparently discussed arming the Bakhtiari and told them he would speak to President Truman about them. Douglas’ visit was reported in the Iranian press, producing accusations that the United States was arming the tribes, and leading the government to restrict travel in the tribal areas by US citizens. See Unattributed report RIT-423; and Tehran Embassy Dispatch 200.
27. Memo from McGhee to Matthews; JIC, *JIC 522/2* and *JIC 522/20*.
28. Department of State, *Foreign Service List*; interviews with one of the paramilitary officers and another CIA officer stationed in Iran during this period, who requested anonymity.
29. NSC, *NSC 107* and *NSC 107/2*.
30. Memo From Dulles to Smith; Memo to Roosevelt; Memo From Wisner to Dulles; Gasiorowski, “CIA’s TPBEDAMN Operation”; “Project Outline,” July 26, 1951; “Project Outline,” undated; and Memo for the Record, June 29, 1951.
31. Memo for the Record, October 9, 1951; interview with the paramilitary officer mentioned in endnote 28; Woodhouse, *Something Ventured*, 106.
32. Memo from Roosevelt; “Minutes,” July 29, 1952. These delays may have reflected a growing belief in the US intelligence community that global war, including a Soviet invasion of Iran, had become less likely because the

Soviets now believed they might not survive a protracted war and they could better achieve their objectives through subversion in regions such as Southeast Asia and the Middle East. See CIA, *NIE-48*.

33. Gasiorowski, "US Perceptions"; Memo of Telephone Conversation; and Tehran Embassy Telegram 481.
34. Memo for the Record, July 31, 1952. In a July 30 meeting, Allen Dulles speculated that it might be necessary for tribal forces to overthrow the current dynasty to forestall a communist coup. See Minutes, July 30, 1952.
35. Memo From Wisner to Joyce; interview with an SIS officer who knew about Woodhouse's activities and requested anonymity; Woodhouse, *Something Ventured*, 116; and Wilber, *Overthrow of Premier Mosaddeq*, 1.
36. Memo From Wisner to Smith; CIA, "Study of CIA Capabilities"; and Memo From Jernegan to Matthews. In November 1952, Iranian authorities arrested an American named Arthur Dubois in the Lur tribal region. See Tehran Embassy Telegram 1836. Dubois had worked in Iran for many years before World War II and then worked for US army intelligence during the war, traveling extensively in southern Iran and writing a series of reports on local tribes. See Tehran Legation Dispatch 466. The second CIA officer mentioned in endnote 28, above, told me Dubois was working on paramilitary operations for the CIA in 1952, presumably on the stay-behind operation. He later helped plan the 1953 coup. See Wilber, *Overthrow of Premier Mosaddeq*, D-2.
37. CIA, *SE-33*, *NIE-75*, and *NIE 75/1*.
38. US Department of the Army, "Estimate of the Capabilities."
39. NSC, *NSC 136/1*.
40. Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'État"; Tehran Embassy Dispatches 414 and 549; and Tehran Embassy Telegram 2593.
41. Tehran Embassy Telegram 3627; Memo of Discussion, March 4, 1953; Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency. Stay-behind plans were discussed at the second of these meetings. See Memorandum of Discussion, March 11, 1953. Bakhtiari tribesmen and the idea of establishing a "Free Iran" state in the south played minor roles in the August 1953 coup. See Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'État," 255, 338.
42. NSC, *First Progress Report*; Letter From Lovett to Acheson.
43. NSC, *First Progress Report*; CIA, "Iran, February 1953"; CIA, "Capabilities of CIA Clandestine Services"; "158. Editorial Note."
44. Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'État," 232; Byrne, "Road to Intervention"; Tehran Embassy Dispatch 251. On April 22, 1953, the NSC directed that all copies of the progress report be returned to it, perhaps indicating that the Eisenhower administration was abandoning the contingency plan. See NSC, "Record of Actions."
45. Tehran Embassy Telegrams 4324, 4356, and 42; Memo of Conversation, June 6, 1953; Wilber, *Overthrow of Premier Mosaddeq*, 13, 27, A-6; Roosevelt, *Countercoup*, 160; interview with Roosevelt; and Memo From Waller to Wisner. Beck, *The Qashqa'i*, 153, reports that US officials offered the Qashqai \$5 million at some point to break with Mosaddeq, which they refused.
46. Record of Meeting; Tehran Embassy Dispatch 608; Beck, *The Qashqa'i*, 155–159; and Memo From Rountree to Under Secretary of State.
47. Tehran Embassy Telegram 1102; NSC, *NSC 5402*.
48. NSC, *NSC 5504*.
49. Byrne and Gasiorowski, "1953 Iran Coup."
50. See, e.g. Marsh, "The United States, Iran and Operation Ajax."
51. Truman authorized extensive covert intervention in Eastern Europe and elsewhere as well. See Long, *CIA and the Soviet Bloc*.
52. See Gasiorowski, "US Perceptions."

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