

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

April 24, 1979

The Honorable Griffin B. Bell
Attorney General of the United States
Department of Justice
Constitution Avenue and Tenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

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APR 24 1979

Dear Mr. Bell:

O.L.A.

I am writing in behalf of my constituent, [redacted] who contacted me regarding his terrifying experience during the release of the two Electronic Data Systems Corporation (EDS) employees from the Gasre Prison in Iran.

I have enclosed a letter from [redacted] which describes what he and other americans experienced due to Mr. Perot's actions to free the EDS employees. [redacted] would like the Department of Justice to conduct an investigation of the incident. I understand the Department has the authority to investigate the matter since there may have been a violation of a law which forbids private individuals from mounting an expeditionary force against a foreign country.

I would appreciate being informed of any actions which have been or will be taken in regard to the EDS incident in Iran. I hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Jim Courter
Jim Courter
Member of Congress

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

JAC:bb

Enclosures

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APR 30 1979

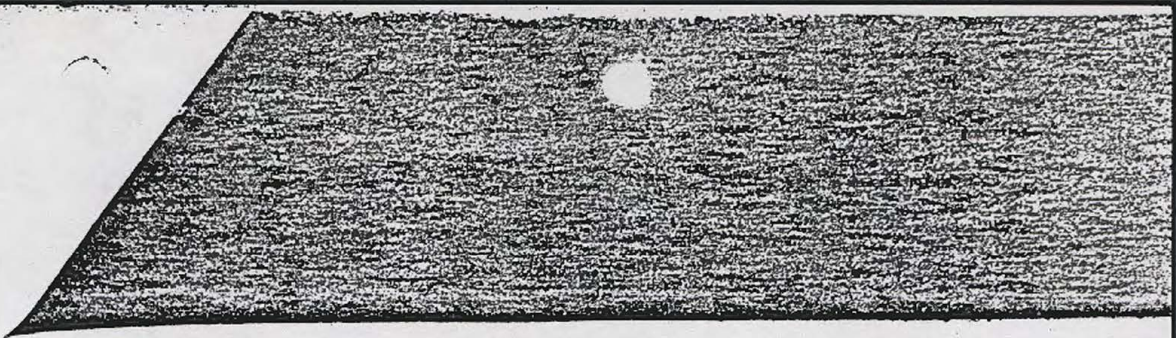

CRIMINAL DIVISION

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O.L.A.

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
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OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
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April 10, 1979

Honorable Jim Courter
Member of Congress
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Courter;

Your interest, as evidenced in your March 30, 1979 letter, to determine what was the result of actions performed by H. Ross Perot which affected Americans living and working in Iran is greatly appreciated.

Attached hereto is, to the best of my ability, an attempt to assemble and reconstruct the chronology and events of my last week in Tehran.

Because news correspondents residing in Tehran were registered guests at the Intercontinental Hotel, much of what I have prepared has never heretofore been published.


I am hopeful that this may assist you in dealing with the State Department and Department of Justice.

Another area which you may address, if you will, is the problem of penalties associated with extension requests for IRS purposes. I, as well as hundreds of others, left all personal belongings, save for some clothes, in Iran. These belongings included tax records and other data required to properly complete 1040 forms.

A review of IRS policy, in light of the fact that conditions were such that we were "evacuated". A complete review of IRS treatment for evacuees would be in order.

I should also like to compliment you on your recent vote against giving OPEC financial assistance.

Yours Truly



REPORT TO HONORABLE J.A. COURTER, MEMBER OF CONGRESS;
CONCERNING TREATMENT OF EXPATRIATES IN IRAN DURING FEBRUARY 11-16, 1979

Background: Some 96 Americans employed by American Bell International Inc.(ABII) moved from their private residences to the Hyatt Crown Hotel in Tehran, Iran on January 25, 1979.

On February 8, a contingent of ABII personnel left on a MATS flight, leaving nine employees and two dependents to wind-down our company business. There were approximately 70 persons at the hotel including German, French, Swiss, and Belgium and other American expatriates. Included were employees of Pan-Am residing at the hotel; one guest was [REDACTED] Chief pilot for Pan-Am, who had arrived to assess conditions at Mehrabad airport for future Pan-Am activity.

The Story: February 10, curfew was called for 4:30 p.m. This curfew hour was announced at 2:00 p.m. and caused a good deal of confusion and threatening activities at all street intersections. (Iranians were as interested in getting off the streets by 4:30 as were the expatriates.)

The Ayatollah Khomeini later urged the nation to disobey these curfew and martial law authorities. This prompted fires to be set throughout Tehran and blockades to be established that night at many street intersections, we avoided these when reporting to our work location at Shah Abbas and 8th Street at about 8:00 A.M. on Sunday February 11, At 10:30 that morning we were advised to return to the hotel as soon as possible; we did so amid gunfire. Gangs of excited thugs were driving along the streets with sticks and some arms.

About 4:00 P.M. we learned that the Bahktiar government had

ed and that the army had refused to fight. (There were frequent blackouts and no English-speaking news broadcasts. The information was obtained from the hotel staff.)

About 7:00 P.M. a handful of young armed Iranians arrived at the hotel and threatened to burn the lobby of the Hyatt and destroy the Evin Hotel. (The Evin Hotel was basically a military domicile and was located only 300 feet from the Hyatt). Somehow, the group was dissuaded from setting fire to the lobby and left.

At 2:45 A.M., Monday morning I was awakened by much shooting, including machine gunfire. I was in my room (1610) which overlooked the Evin Prison, located about 1500 yards north of the Hyatt. This heavy shooting continued until daybreak. At that point, I could see ambulances arriving, moving into the jail compound and taking injured out. At the same time, the bunkers, which I observed, contained weapons and ammunition, were being overrun by people. They were also swarming over the prison grounds in what I perceived to be an effort to find prisoners.

Just before nine o'clock, that Monday morning, I went to the lobby to meet three Iranians, employed by Price-Waterhouse, to discuss plans for taking over the packing and shipping of employee's goods which had become my non-telephone work assignment. We were interrupted in our talks by the arrival of five armed young men who were screaming at the hotel management. One of my three Iranians who joined that group, and returned to me saying that the armed men were looking for two Americans who had escaped from prison. The armed Iranians demanded to search the lobby and hotel. My Iranian contacts later left, and I returned to my room after warning other Americans (by hotel phone) not to visit the lobby.

armed forces were escorted by the hotel people through hotel and although they did not enter any of the rooms, each door was opened. I had been joined by three other ABII Americans and an Iranian employed by ABII. At about 11:00 A.M. shooting began on the Evin Hotel side of the Hyatt. (My room faced the north, and the Evin Hotel was slightly south and east of the Hyatt and could be viewed from the hall windows).

Fearful that bullets would injure us in the hallway, the five of us returned to my room to observe the activities at the Evin Prison. Everyone, women and children included, possessed weapons. We could witness all the activities through binoculars as well as the naked eye. About 11:30 hundred of the Iranians who had been along the Evin road began running down the lanes and commenced shooting at the windows on the north side. (We later discovered that the entire hotel had been under siege from all sides). The Iranian ABII employee went into the hallway and later disappeared while the four of us crept into the bathroom and remained there praying while the shooting continued. The windows to my room were shot out and bullet fragments ricocheted from the ceiling and walls covering my bed and floor with glass and debris.

The shooting outside subsided somewhat and about one o'clock we could hear some gunfire within the hotel. We decided if we were to die, we would do so, not in a bathroom but as men. We could hear voices and doors being kicked along the 16th floor, and when we detected them outside room 1610, we opened the door, raised our hands and indicated, by saying " Bali, Bali, Bali", that we were anxious to talk. The man, who appeared the leader, of the team placed a bayonet in my stomach and asked if I wanted to return to America. I averred that I did, and my three comrades stated their desire to also leave Iran. We were then told that

ould join our "friends". We accompanied the guards to the lobby and saw that all expatriates had been convened there. While we were under armed surveillance, the rooms of all guests were searched, looted, and ransacked.

Through a ruse, I was able to place a call to my wife in New Jersey to inform her of our predicament and to urge her to contact ABII corporate headquarters in South Plainfield. After that, no further communication was made by me to America.

During the early evening, representatives of the French, Swiss and German embassies visited the hotel to talk to their countrymen. Americans, however, were registered with some Iranian 'official' by name and number. He questioned why we had not been contacted or visited by the American embassy. Obviously, we did not know. Later (about 9:00 P.M.), we were taken individually by armed guard to our respective rooms and warned to remain there until morning; the warning indicated that we would be shot if found in the hallways. During that night, sporadic shooting continued outside north and east of the hotel site.

Sometime during Tuesday morning, I was able to place a call to the American embassy; I talked to "a" colonel Warren who indicated that no one knew what was occurring at the Hyatt. I later talked to a friend, an employee of Bell Helicopter staying at the Hilton, who stated that they also had been under fire and were experiencing the same treatment.

We attempted to carry on some business in the lobby with certain Iranians who were permitted to enter the hotel provided they remain in the lobby. I furnished to one, the passport of the Iranian ABII employee, whom we had earlier learned was a member of Savak. I had previously disposed of his attache case and 'walkie-talkie' for fear of implications. He took the passport out in his shoe because he was a personal friend of Mr.

Iranian.

Radio programs were being transmitted through the hotel's loudspeaker system. The programs contained religious music, religious talks, news announcements and orders, all in the farsi language.

Wednesday afternoon, while sitting in the lobby, we were advised by one of the guards that the American embassy was overtaken and that Ambassador Sullivan was a prisoner. We were later informed of the murder of the Ambassador to Afghanistan.

During these days, the bunkers and hillsides were still swarming with Iranians obtaining arms and ammunition. They also appeared to be searching the hillsides for God knows what. There were frequent explosions at the prison that rattled the hotel. We sat in locations wherein we would not be hit by the chandeliers, if they fell; the armed guards were still patrolling the lobby and the mezzanine and seemed unperturbed by the explosions.

Meanwhile, the Ayatollah announced that all the arms should be turned in to the revolutionary authorities. Possession of arms, he said, was 'haram', a taboo under Islamic law.

This declaration caused the revolutionaries to close off the Evin Road leading to the prison.

Thursday morning found hundreds of Iranians along the Vanek Expressway wishing to visit the prison site, but were not permitted to do so. Many of our revolutionary guards had left the hotel, leaving only a handful to watch over us.

About noon, we were advised to return to our rooms because it was felt that assembled crowds would invade the hotel. We were told that the crowds suspected that a secret tunnel connected the prison to the hotel and that the hotel was owned by the Shah and was alleged to be a SAVAK headquarters. We returned to our

(s) and I watched the crowd move toward the hotel. Several mullahs then appeared and turned away the crowd. The handful of guards was reinforced considerably later that afternoon.

I had been requested by ABII higher management to take whatever steps were necessary to evacuate personnel from the country. On Thursday evening, I was advised by the Pan-Am people that a 707 was due into Tehran the next morning from Bahrain to evacuate Pan-Am personnel. I was told that if I could arrange transportation to the airport the ABII people could be placed on this special flight.

Discussions with the Iranian guards that evening produced agreement that we could leave the hotel and upon payment of over 12,000 rials I managed to obtain guards to accompany us to the airport.

At about four in the morning (Friday, Feb.) 16 I was again awakened by gunfire. I had planned to meet Americans at about 5:30 for a six o'clock departure. In fact, I arranged for the coffee shop to be opened for tea for the Iranian guards and orange juice and coffee for the departing Americans. Shortly after six o'clock we left in a nine car convoy (ABII vehicles) and after stopping several times at checkpoints we arrived at Mehrabad.

After several hours of waiting, being searched and many passport checks we boarded the plane and left about 1:20 P.M. for Frankfurt.

Several days after my return to America, I learned about the escape plot made by H. Ross Perot. The release of two of his em- from the Qsar prison was probably the cause of the problems we encountered. Communications, being what they were, possibly caused the Iranians to believe that we were harboring the escapees and that all Americans remaining behind were CIA operatives.