

MEMORANDUM

TO: EDS vs. Iran File
FROM: John E. Howell
DATE: October 26, 1981
RE: Evacuation Flight from Tehran to Frankfurt

After spending the night at the U.S. Embassy compound on Friday, February 16, 1979, under the surveillance of the revolutionary guards, on Saturday morning ^{at the time} we were loaded onto buses along with approximately 800 other evacuees. There were several revolutionary guards with automatic rifles on each bus and the buses went in a caravan to the airport where there were two Pan-Am 747's waiting as evacuation flights, one of which was going to Frankfurt and the other to Athens.

We were apprehensive of the possibility of a visual check by Dadgar or some of his staff and so were attempting to determine if there was anybody at the airport who was looking for us. The airport was fairly deserted except for the evacuation crowd and we tried to mingle with the crowd to avoid being conspicuous. There was a moment of concern when Bob Young spotted some people on the peripheal area of the crowd who were looking at photographs and scanning the crowd, evidently looking for a familiar face, and who then made their way through the crowd to Rich and Kathy Gallagher. However, it turned out that they were only seeking to return some of the Gallagher's luggage that friends of theirs had removed from the hotel after the revolutionaries had searched our hotel rooms and torn up our luggage.

We attempted to find out what kind of security checks there might be at the airport and were told by somebody with Pan-American Airways that they were looking

pretty hard for a couple of guys, but as far as they knew, other than those two people, the "stop" list was several weeks old. After spending some amount of time milling around and waiting for tickets to be processed, it came ^{time} time to pass through passport control, which we felt would be the logical place for them to try to search for and stop people. I was the first one to get to the passport control point and got into one of the lines, trying to remain inconspicuous. They were conducting a much closer check than was normally conducted. As you got to the passport control booth, the man there first checked and stamped the normal exit documentation. Then he did a face to passport picture identification, and finally compared the passport name to some documents in the passport control booth. I was apprehensive that the names of those of us who had been dealing with Dadgar would be on the stop list or that somebody from Dadgar's staff would be there to attempt to recognize us, but we all made it through passport control without problem.

After making it through passport control, we assumed that the hard part was over and that it was just a matter of waiting until the flights could get organized and take off. After a fairly long wait, we had to pass through a security and cash retention check point, where they checked both for weapons and for the amount of currency which you were taking out of the country, since the new revolutionary government had placed a fairly strict limit on the wealth that people could take out of Iran. Several of us, in particular Joe Poche, had a significant amount of currency, and so we hid it on various parts of our body. Joe Poche, I believe, put several thousand dollars in U.S. 100 dollar bills in each of his shoes and walked through the check point with the money in his shoes.

After another wait, ^{time} we were taken outside to get on the buses to the airplanes. However, there was another delay in which we were requested to go search through some baggage that had been set outside to identify any bags that might be ours. If we identified a bag we were supposed to call a revolutionary guard who would then open the

baggage and inspect it prior to loading. Fortunately, none of our baggage had been set aside for such an inspection.

The buses took us out to the airplane and there was another line waiting to board the airplane from the rear door. As we got to the stairway up to the airplane, there was another check point at which a revolutionary guard was doing a face to passport picture check. There were a fairly large number of revolutionary guards wandering around the 747, including one in the cockpit with the pilot, all carrying automatic weapons.

After the passengers were boarded and some confusion as to who should be on which flight was resolved, the pilot announced that passengers Paul John and William Deming should identify themselves. The announcement was repeated and I realized that they were looking for Paul John Chiapparone and William Deming Gaylord, but had somehow dropped their last names. I immediately got a knot in my stomach and pretended that I was continuing to read my book, trying to turn a page every minute or two, even though I had no idea what words were on the pages. When those two people did not identify themselves, the pilot announced that the revolutionaries would do a passport search for them. The revolutionaries then came down the aisles checking each passenger's passport, with a careful face to passport picture comparison and a close look at the name on the passport.

After this passport check was completed, the pilot announced that Paul John and William Deming had not been located. He said that unless they were located, the "man in charge on the ground" would have to come aboard and do another passport check and that the plane might not be allowed to leave until Paul John and William Deming were located. I felt sure that the "man in charge on the ground" was either Dadgar or one of his staff who would recognize me and Bob Young and possibly Rich Gallagher. The pilot again asked that those two people identify themselves, or if anybody on board knew their whereabouts that those persons tell the revolutionaries so the flight could get under way.

time

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After a substantial delay, the "man in charge on the ground" came aboard for another passport check. Much to my relief, he was not Dadgar or one of his staff but was a Pan-Am person in charge of immigration control. He went through the plane very carefully, checking each passenger's passport with a face to picture identification, a name check, and an examination of the passport picture and seals to ensure that the passport was genuine. This was a very time consuming process.

A short while after the second passport check was completed, the pilot announced that the revolutionaries had decided to do an item by item check of the luggage as it was loaded on the plane. By now it was getting to be late afternoon and there was some fear that if this task took too long, the plane might not be able to take off since it had to be out of Iran airspace by dark due to the lack of air traffic control over Iranian airspace. During the luggage checking process, from time to time a baggage claim check number would be announced and the holder of that claim check would be asked to identify himself. At first nobody would do so until they explained that they only needed to unlock the luggage for searching. Fortunately, they did not request that we open any of our luggage.

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Finally, after another hour or so of delay, and after receiving clearance from the FAA in Washington, D.C. to take off with an overload of passengers, since not only the upstairs lounge in the 747 was filled, but also passengers were sitting in the aisles, the pilot announced that all of the luggage had been searched and loaded and within a few minutes the airplane was taking off. There was a good deal of relief when the plane left the ground, but we all remained somewhat apprehensive until the pilot announced that we had left Iran airspace, at which time the general rejoicing became much more pronounced.

During the flight the five of us decided that when we got to Frankfurt we would go have a big party, find a place to sleep until we had rested up from our approximately 48 hours without sleep, and then worry about trying to figure out some way to get back to the United States. We were somewhat disappointed when we arrived in Frankfurt and

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were immediately directed from one jetway into the airport to another jetway out of the airport and into the 707 that was waiting with the rest of the team to go back to the United States.

fact check

John has all dates.

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