

Memorandum of Conversation¹

Washington, April 12, 1962.

- SUBJECT
- United States-Iran Relations
- PARTICIPANTS
- The Shah of Iran
- Major Gen. Khatami, Commander, Imperial Iranian Air Force
- Brig. Gen. Afkhami, J-5, Imperial Iranian Supreme Commander's Staff
- Honorable Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense
- General L.L. Lemnitzer, Chairman, JCS
- Honorable Julius C. Holmes, U.S. Ambassador to Iran
- Mr. William Bundy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, ISA/OSD
- After introductory remarks, the Shah led off by saying that the key question was whether "CENTO recommendations" were to be taken seriously as a basis for planning or not. He had before him a CENTO planning study dated January 5, 1962 (CENTO/CMPS/TS.3000/3/2, Joint Campaign Plan--Requirements--Memorandum by the Chief of Staff Combined Military Planning Staff) and read from it at frequent intervals in the early part of the conversation.

Mr. McNamara countered by saying that our strategic views are based in the first instance on the importance of our nuclear striking forces as the basic deterrent to Soviet action anywhere against such countries as Iran. He laid before the Shah a table showing the prospective buildup of U.S. striking power, with particular emphasis on an alert status of 15 minutes or better, and thus virtually immune to Soviet neutralization.

The table was then reviewed in detail. The Shah raised a question about anti-missile missile claims by Khrushchev, and Secretary McNamara said these were greatly exaggerated, that there was a tremendous gap between achieving a single interception of a shot known in advance and achieving an operational capability in the face of multiple shots, decoy techniques, and multiple warhead possibilities. The Shah then asked about "invisible" missiles, to which Secretary McNamara responded by saying that there were ways of confusing the radar pickup but any method of eliminating it was "way off" in the future. He said he had no doubt we were picking up Soviet shots, which led the Shah to comment briefly that the US got valuable information from its sites in Iran. Secretary McNamara nodded, and the matter was not further pursued.

The Shah asked specifically whether we "still" had nuclear plans to hit the border areas northwest of Iran. Secretary McNamara and General Lemnitzer replied that we did, as part of the over-all master targeting plan.

At the close of this phase of the discussion, the Shah reverted at once to his original question--were "CENTO recommendations" to be the basis of planning? Secretary McNamara said that in our view the mission of the Iranian forces should be related more to the threat from Iraq and Afghanistan, and that the force level and equipment we would propose should be regarded more as complementary than a part of CENTO studies.

The Shah then made an earnest statement of Iran's needs, arguing that Turkey and Pakistan could not (or at least would not) earmark any forces for the defense of Iran. He then asked what the role of the CENTO Military Staff

Commander was to be. He said that just before his departure Ayub had sent him a message that he, Ayub, was very unhappy over the nomination of a British general for this post, feeling that a British officer would not possibly have the necessary leverage and control over the key US forces. Ayub had gone so far as to say that he might drop out of CENTO if the nomination were insisted on, rather than an American. The Shah said that Iran did not share this view, but did wonder how the new setup could be effective.

General Lemnitzer responded by giving a brief history of the CENTO CCMS proposal, pointing out his own part in getting it adopted. He said that there had been talk of modeling the setup on NATO, but that the present idea did not go so far. It was like NATO, however, in that the Commander did not actually have forces at his command until hostilities broke out. On the question of Turkey and Pakistan, General Lemnitzer agreed that their difficulty in assigning or earmarking forces was a major one. As to naming an American as CCMS, both Secretary McNamara and General Lemnitzer referred briefly to the difficulty of doing so as long as the US was not a member of CENTO.

The Shah then referred to the force level problem and specifically to the proposal for a 150,000 man force level that had been made by the President. He said this ran dead counter to CENTO studies, which recommended substantial increases. He then read at length from the CENTO paper quoting excerpts to the effect that Iran needed much greater forces--and that "US military experts" agreed. Some specific figures from the paper were 12 regular plus 3 armored divisions, 300 fighter aircraft (20% all-weather), 24 light bombers, extensive early warning and GCI facilities, and surface-to-air missiles, etc.

At the close of this reading the Shah asked bluntly whether we were now to shift away from CENTO, in effect to a bilateral basis of planning for Iran's forces. Secretary McNamara did not respond flatly in the affirmative, but did state that CENTO plans must be reconsidered.

The Shah appeared to take this as an affirmative response that a change in the planning basis was being made. He commented that he could not tell the Iranian people this, and that the new planning basis would depart completely from CENTO. He then went on to outline the kind of deployment in forces that might be visualized for Iran. This would consist of two parts, the first being "very strong", well-equipped, mobile forces deployed so that they could cover rapidly either the Iraqi or the Afghan front. The second element would be static forces in the north, less well-equipped and mobile, and designed to fulfill purely a static role.

Secretary McNamara commented that we would be prepared to join in a study of such a concept, either through our CENTO liaison, through direct contact, or both. He expressed the preliminary view that such a deployment would be more effective than the present one.

In response to the Secretary's question, the Shah indicated that the force levels he had in mind for the second component would be three regiments (equivalent of a division) in the north (presumably in the Tabriz area), and a division in the east. In addition, the division that would continue to be stationed in Teheran would cover the nearby border area.

The discussion turned to the specific figure of 150,000 men. The Shah said that it might be necessary to go slightly above this figure in order to avoid giving the Iranian people the impression that their northern border was no longer defensive. Secretary McNamara agreed that the U.S. could study whatever force level need might exist above 150,000 men in order "to avoid the appearance of complete depletion". No precise figure of the possible add-on was mentioned. The strong implication of the discussion was that it would be on the order of 10,000 men.

In response to Ambassador Holmes' questions, the Shah clarified a remark he had made about transferring border guard troops to the Gendarmerie. He made clear that this would be the only major administrative change, and that the two divisions he envisaged being deployed in the north would remain a part of the regular army.

Secretary McNamara then put before the Shah a formal proposal to send a planning team from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider with the Iranian Armed Forces their deployment and force levels in accordance with the above discussion. The Shah quickly assented to this proposal.

Secretary McNamara then put before the Shah a written summary sheet of the proposed military assistance equipment deliveries, mid-1962 to mid-1967.² He proceeded to run down the list explaining each item. With respect to the M-113 APCs, he and General Lemnitzer stressed that these were the newest and finest, and were available only in limited quantities to U.S. forces. The Shah asked several questions about the characteristics of the M-113 and seemed pleased with the responses.

The Secretary also laid stress on Item 4 (vehicles), pointing out that this would deal with the problem of replacing the present World War II vehicles in the Iranian inventory. Here, and at several other points in the discussion, the Secretary stressed that this item was the key to the Shah's emphasis on mobility for his forces.

With respect to Item 7 (H-43B helicopters), the Secretary and General Lemnitzer again stressed that this was a highly modern item that was just beginning to be introduced in U.S. forces.

With respect to Item 8 (civic action support), the Secretary expressed pleasure at the progress that Iran was making in this area, and the Shah nodded in apparent agreement and approval.

Item 9 (Guchon) and 10 (liaison aircraft) caused no particular response or comment.

With respect to Item 11 (C-130s), the Shah expressed immediate concern whether 4 would be adequate. He then stated that Iran's pressing need was to augment the present C-47 inventory by 12 additional aircraft for early delivery. (See further discussion below.)

With respect to Item 12 (combat air capability), the Shah questioned whether there should be 13 aircraft per squadron. The Secretary and

General Lemnitzer responded that for covering dispersed areas, we believed such a squadron strength was better than a greater number, and that our own squadrons were now following in the range from 15 to 18 aircraft. The Shah indicated that the basic question was whether the total number of aircraft was adequate, but did not pursue the point at this stage.

The Secretary specifically called attention to the necessity for improvement in the operational and maintenance efficiency of the Iranian Air Force.

General Katahmire responded that the maintenance was satisfactory on the F-86s, but had to be done out of the country on C-47s of which only 6 of the stock of 11 were now operational. He said that the I.A.F. had asked MAAG for an additional support but had had no response. He conceded that the I.A.F. maintenance was weak on electronics and that the NCOS were not well-trained in this area. The Shah said that as new aircraft were brought in, experts should be sent at the outset to train the Iranians for maintenance, to which the Secretary agreed.

In response to the Shah's question, the Secretary said that the choice of aircraft lay between the N-156 and the F-104-17, that the former appeared to be a highly versatile and satisfactory aircraft, but that the F-104-17 might have certain logistical advantages because of the presence of 104s in neighboring countries. The Shah showed keen interest in the discussion of the characteristics, and particularly in the 1200 mile range of both aircraft mentioned.

The Shah then asked whether we envisaged keeping the F-86s in service. The Secretary said that we certainly did, and that we ourselves had deployed F-86s to Europe and were continuing to keep the aircraft as first-line aircraft. The Shah expressed surprise at this, but seemed somewhat pleased and relieved.

The Secretary noted that we believed the F-86 to be superior to the MIG-15 or MIG-17. He said that this was particularly true with Sidewinders, and bluntly asked why the I.A.F. did not have its Sidewinders in operational shape.

General Katahmire referred briefly and vocally to problems of creating storage facilities. The Secretary (here and on several other occasions) stressed that we could not undertake to supply modern aircraft without improvement of the maintenance capabilities of the Iranian Air Force.

With respect to Item 12d (staging base in northeast Iran), the Shah quickly picked up the terms and expressed the view that a "full base" was needed. The Secretary said that we could study this problem further, but that the staging base concept was the personal recommendation of General LeMay. The Shah expressed a desire to have bases at both Meshed and Zahadan. He later returned to this same point, and all hands examined the map and agreed that the matter should be studied.

The Shah raised the question of protection of airfields, and expressed a desire for surface-to-air missiles for this purpose. The Secretary responded that it was our judgment that this was not the most effective way to protect airfields, but that reliance should be placed upon adequate early warning and adequate

numbers of fighter aircraft. The Shah did not pursue this subject more in detail.

After completing review of the list, Secretary McNamara returned to the problem of maintenance, both of ground and air equipment, and urged the vital importance of command supervision in this area. General Katahmi responded that the in-commission rate of the F-86s were now at a satisfactory 80%, and that 70 pilots were being maintained in a proficient status. He again admitted a weakness in electronics and suggested that "someone on top" was needed. (This appeared to be a suggestion for greater U.S. participation in the electronics training process.)

With respect to ground equipment, General Katahmi noted that many of the trucks were extremely old and had serious maintenance difficulties as a result. Reverting to the list, Secretary McNamara stressed the great qualities of the C-130, and that only limited numbers of this aircraft were now available in our own forces. In summary, he noted that the total proposed list represented an increase of 50-75% in the annual delivery rate, over the deliveries of the past two years.

The Shah returned to the transport question, pointing out Iran's vast spaces and stressing particularly his parachute battalion, which he praised highly. He returned thus to the question of 12 additional C-47s. This led to a discussion of the present maintenance arrangements for C-47s, with General Katahmi noting that the present basic maintenance performed in Europe was extremely slow. The Secretary agreed that "we must work this out". General Katahmi referred to the low flying time of transport pilots and the short time available for parachute training, and to the difficulty of keeping an adequate number of aircraft in service at one time.

The Shah expressed satisfaction at the inclusion of Item 6 (2 inshore minesweepers). The Secretary took the occasion to note that we believed we must cancel the presently proposed two patrol frigates. The Shah expressed unhappiness at this, saying that "if it is vitally necessary, we must find a way". The Secretary noted, however, that in the event of any extensive naval engagement in the Persian Gulf, the issue would not be decided by Iranian naval forces, and Mr. Bundy noted the U.S. flotilla at Bahrain.

Responding to the Shah's reiterated concern on C-47s, the Secretary agreed to look at this question.

On the air base question, the Shah queried whether it would be desirable to extend the Tabriz airfield. General Katahmi thought this would not be necessary since the proposed new aircraft would have a 1200 mile range.

The Shah, the Secretary, and General Lemnitzer all joined in stressing the key importance of early warning. The Secretary made clear that we would need to consult with the British, but that we had in mind a substantial additional effort. Specific locations were not discussed.

This completed the discussion of the list. The Shah then related the shortcomings of his armed forces, quoting extensively from a paper (Tab C to the original of this memorandum)³ purporting to be a r[sum[of CENTO findings

concerning the Iranian armed forces. This alluded to specific shortages of rifles, automatic rifles, transport for heavy guns and heavy weapons, and maintenance. The artillery situation, however, was judged to be "operable". The Shah then raised a specific question whether the M-47 tanks held by Iran would continue to be supportable. The Secretary responded emphatically that we did have adequate spare parts and supplies on hand for the foreseeable future and could, if necessary, manufacture more. He noted that we had collaborated only last November with the Italians on arrangements to rehabilitate and furnish the M-47 to Italy. This appeared to surprise and somewhat relieve the Shah.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Shah briefly produced Iranian estimates of the situation of the armed forces of Turkey, Iraq and Afghanistan. These were stated to be the province of General Afkahmi, and the Shah briefly renewed key points (which appeared to be in rough agreement with our own estimates), and indicated that General Afkahmi would wish to discuss these further in his Pentagon appointments the following day.

The conversation, which had commenced at about 3:10 was concluded at 5:00 o'clock on a friendly note. Secretary McNamara asked for the return of the discussion lists of equipment deliveries, indicating that we proposed to present this to the Shah in the form of a memorandum of understanding prior to his departure.

William P. Bundy ⁴

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD/ISA Files: FRC 65 A 3501, Iran 1962, 000.1-092. Secret. Presumably drafted by William Bundy. The Shah's schedule, contained in Department of State Press Release No. 224, April 5, indicates that the Shah would meet with McNamara between 3:10 and 4:30 p.m. Handwritten notes of the meeting by Lemnitzer are in the National Defense University, Lemnitzer Files.

² Not attached to the source text. For text of the final list entitled "Planned Deliveries of Military Equipment to Iran, July 1, 1962 through June 30, 1967," see Annex A to [Document 248](#).

³ Not attached to the source text.

⁴ Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.