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Pres. Carter to PM

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PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T 54/80

As you know, the UN Commission of Inquiry commenced its work in Tehran on February 23. By agreement between the United States, Iran, and Secretary General Waldheim, the Commission proceeded to Iran with two purposes: to hear the grievances of the Iranians and to allow a resolution of the crisis. As part of the arrangements for the Commission's work, the U.S. agreed to the Iranian Government's request that the Commission visit all of the 50 American hostages, subject to the understanding that the hostages would not be interrogated.

After more than two weeks of intensive discussion in Tehran, it became apparent that the Commission would not be permitted to visit the hostages, as Iran had agreed. Because of this development, the Commission in consultation with Secretary General Waldheim decided to suspend its work in Tehran at least until the sensitive period before the first stage of Iran's parliamentary election on March 14 is over. Although there is hope that the Commission may resume its work at an appropriate time, the inability of the Iranian Government to follow the plan which was agreed creates a serious situation.

For your personal background only, the steps which were agreed among all the parties at the outset included the transfer of the hostages to the control of the Iranian Government, the submission of the Commission's report to the Secretary General on the Commission's return to New York, and the release of the hostages in connection with the completion of the work of the Commission. Because the Commission may have a future role to play, I will appreciate your

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keeping this in confidence. The mere fact that the Iranian authorities had agreed to such a plan could harm them politically in Iran and jeopardize those most committed to resolving the problem.

The United States has taken every reasonable step to assure the success of the Commission in resolving the hostage crisis. In order to create an atmosphere for a solution, we twice postponed imposition of economic sanctions, as envisaged in the Soviet-vetoed Security Council Resolution of January 13, first in deference to the wishes of a number of our friends who urged that we not impose the sanctions during the meeting of the Islamic Conference, and subsequently while the activity leading up to the formation of the Commission and its subsequent work in Tehran was underway. We also signalled in a variety of public and private channels our desire for a quick resolution of the hostage crisis in a way which would permit a subsequent dialogue for a restoration of some reasonable relationship between Iran and the United States. Although there were those in Iran who supported efforts to achieve an early and mutually acceptable outcome to the hostage crisis, their efforts have for the moment been overridden.

I am writing you in some detail about the seriousness of the new situation. If the work of the Commission comes to an end without a resolution of the crisis, it will be a severe setback for any early progress through negotiations. As I have said, our first effort will be to contribute what we can to helping the Commission to resume its work as soon as its chances of success have improved. However, if that is not possible, we will inevitably be forced back to the economic sanctions which were envisioned two months ago and perhaps to other measures as well that will have repercussions beyond the U.S.-Iranian relationship. Because of the importance of keeping in close touch on these issues, I wanted to share my thinking with you at the earliest possible time. 11

In the meantime, it would be a serious error if misleading signals were sent to the Iranians through



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bilateral measures that might indicate business as usual. I would appreciate it very much if you could review those measures which you instituted during the winter, such as the informal financial measures, the restraint on buying Iranian oil at prices sharply different from other OPEC producers, and the ban on supply of military equipment, to assure that they are being enforced. I need your help in impressing on Iranian authorities the gravity of their continuing disregard of international law and human rights. If channels are available to you, it would be most helpful if you could find ways to convey to the Iranian leadership that it is essential to create conditions in which the work of the Commission can be resumed and the crisis between the U.S. and Iran resolved as soon as possible so that Iran may resume its normal relationships.

I have appreciated your support and am confident that we will continue to stand together.

13 March 80

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