0800
25 April 1980

PRESS GUIDANCE: OPERATION TO RESCUE HOSTAGES

The Department of Defense has nothing to add to what the President said regarding the operation to rescue the hostages.

It is suggested that you check back periodically; we expect to have additional information later today.

INITIAL WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT (RELEASED APPROX 0100 EST 25 APRIL) ATTACHED

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UP-097
R W
(SMUGGLERS)

WASHINGTON (UPI) - A GROUP OF SMUGGLERS STUMBLED ON THE IRANIAN DESERT STAGING AREA FOR THE U.S. MILITARY FORCE THAT TRIED TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES, BUT RAN AWAY INSTEAD OF REPORTING THE INCIDENT TO AUTHORITIES, A WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL SAID TODAY.

AT ONE POINT, A BUS WITH 53 PERSONS ON BOARD WAS STOPPED BY AMERICAN TROOPS ON THE ROAD NEAR THE STAGING ABOUT 200 MILES SOUTHEAST OF TEHRAN. THE RESCUE PARTY DETAINED THE PASSENGERS.

THEN A TRUCK AND A CAR WERE SEEN COMING DOWN THE ROADWAY. THE U.S. TROOPS "STOPPED THE TRUCK," SAID THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL.

"THE TRUCK WAS RELUCTANT TO STOP AND THEY FORCED IT TO. THE FELLOW WHO WAS DRIVING JUMPED OUT AND RAN AROUND, JUMPED INTO THE SEDAN AND THEY WENT OFF THE ROAD, HEADING ACROSS THE DESERT," HE SAID.

"I UNDERSTAND IT IS THE TRADITIONAL PATH OF SMUGGLERS IN THE AREA. THERE WAS A GENERAL INCLINATION TO BELIEVE THAT THE LAST PLACE THAT PEOPLE IN THAT CAR WERE GOING WAS TO THE LOCAL GENDARMES - AND APPARENTLY THEY DIDN'T."

UPI 04-25 03:02 PES

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
ON
HOSTAGE RESCUE ATTEMPT

The Oval Office

(7:00 A.M. EST)

THE PRESIDENT: Late yesterday, I cancelled a carefully planned operation which was underway in Iran to position our rescue team for later withdrawal of American hostages who have been held captive there since November 4th.

Equipment failure in the rescue helicopters made it necessary to end the mission. As our team was withdrawing, after my order to do so, two of our American aircraft collided on the ground following a refueling operation in a remote desert location in Iran. Other information about this rescue mission will be made available to the American people when it is appropriate to do so.

There was no fighting; there was no combat. But to my deep regret, eight of the crewmen of the two aircraft which collided were killed, and several other Americans were hurt in the accident.

Our people were immediately airlifted from Iran. Those who were injured have gotten medical treatment and all of them are expected to recover.

No knowledge of this operation by any Iranian officials or authorities was evident to us until several hours after all Americans were withdrawn from Iran.

Our rescue team knew, and I knew, that the operation was certain to be difficult and it was certain to be dangerous. We were all convinced that if and when the rescue operation had been commenced that it had an excellent chance of success. They were all volunteers; they were all highly trained. I met with their leaders before they went on this operation. They knew then what hopes of mine and of all Americans they carried with them.

To the families of those who died and who were wounded, I want to express the admiration I feel for the courage of their loved ones and the sorrow that I feel personally for their sacrifice.

2. FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENT. EMBASSIES SHOULD AT THEIR DISCRETION, CONVEY THE SUBSTANCE OF THE STATEMENT TO APPROPRIATE HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AT THE EARLIEST TIME.

(APPROX 0100 EST 25 APR)

3. BEGIN TEXT:

THE PRESIDENT HAS ORDERED THE CANCELLATION OF AN OPERATION IN IRAN WHICH WAS UNDERWAY TO PREPARE FOR A RESCUE OF OUR HOSTAGES. THE MISSION WAS TERMINATED BECAUSE OF EQUIPMENT FAILURE. DURING THE SUBSEQUENT WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL THERE WAS A COLLISION BETWEEN OUR AIRCRAFT ON THE GROUND AT A REMOTE DESERT LOCATION IN IRAN. THERE WERE NO MILITARY HOSTILITIES, BUT THE PRESIDENT DEEPLY REGRETS THAT EIGHT AMERICAN CREW MEMBERS OF THE TWO AIRCRAFT WERE KILLED AND OTHERS WERE INJURED IN THE ACCIDENT. AMERICANS INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION HAVE NOW BEEN AIRLIFTED FROM IRAN AND THOSE WHO WERE INJURED ARE BEING GIVEN MEDICAL TREATMENT AND ARE EXPECTED TO RECOVER.

THIS MISSION WAS NOT MOTIVATED BY HOSTILITY TOWARD IRAN OR THE IRANIAN PEOPLE AND THERE WERE NO IRANIAN CASUALTIES.

PREPARATIONS FOR THIS RESCUE MISSION WERE ORDERED FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS, TO PROTECT THE NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THIS COUNTRY, AND TO ALLEVIATE INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS. THE PRESIDENT ACCEPTS FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DECISION TO ATTEMPT TO RESCUE.

THE NATION IS DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO THE BRAVE MEN WHO WERE PREPARING TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES.

THE UNITED STATES CONTINUES TO HOLD THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFETY OF THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES.

THE UNITED STATES REMAINS DETERMINED TO OBTAIN THEIR SAFE RELEASE AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. END TEXT.

mission. It was not directed against Iran; it was not directed against the people of Iran. It was not undertaken with any feeling of hostility toward Iran or its people. It has caused no Iranian casualties.

Planning for this rescue effort began shortly after our embassy was seized. But, for a number of reasons, I waited until now to put those rescue plans into effect. To be feasible, this complex operation had to be the product of intensive planning and intensive training and repeated rehearsal.

However, a resolution of this crisis through negotiations and with voluntary action on the part of the Iranian officials was obviously then, has been and will be preferable.

This rescue attempt had to await my judgment that the Iranian authorities could not or would not resolve this crisis on their own initiative. With the steady unraveling of authority in Iran and the mounting dangers that were posed to the safety of the hostages themselves and the growing realization that their early release was highly unlikely, I made a decision to commence the rescue operations plans.

This attempt became a necessity and a duty. The readiness of our team to undertake the rescue made it completely practicable. Accordingly, I made the decision to set our long developed plans into operation. I ordered this rescue mission prepared in order to safeguard American lives, to protect America's national interest and to reduce the tensions in the world that have been caused among many nations as this crisis has continued. It was my decision to attempt the rescue operation. It was my decision to cancel it when problems developed in the placement of our rescue team for a future rescue operation. The responsibility is fully my own.

In the aftermath of the attempt, we continue to hold the government of Iran responsible for the safety and for the early release of the American hostages who have been held so long.

The United States remains determined to bring about their safe release at the earliest date possible. As President, I know that our entire nation feels the deep gratitude I feel for the brave men who were prepared to rescue their fellow Americans from captivity. And, as President, I also know that the nation shares not only my disappointment that the rescue effort could not be mounted because of mechanical difficulties, but also my determinati to persevere and to bring all of our hostages home to freedom.

The mission on which they were embarked was a humanitarian

We have been disappointed before. We will not give up in our efforts. Throughout this extraordinarily difficult period, we have pursued and will continue to pursue every possible avenue to secure the release of the hostages. In these efforts, the support of the American people and of our friends throughout the world has been a most crucial element. That support of other nations is even more important now. We will seek to continue, along with other nations and with the officials of Iran, a prompt resolution of the crisis without any loss of life and through peaceful and diplomatic means.

Thank you very much.

END (7:07 A.M. EST)