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## **FLAG and the Diplomacy of the Iran Hostage Families**

**Daniel Strieff**

Abstract. The extraordinary public diplomacy carried out by the families of the American hostages held in Iran from 1979-1981 played a pivotal role in domesticating and humanising the biggest foreign policy crisis of Jimmy Carter's presidency. The families, notably represented by the Family Liaison Action Group [FLAG], led an unprecedented campaign to raise awareness of the plight of the captives. They granted interviews, held press conferences, attended commemorative events, and organised public campaigns. Relatives also met with foreign leaders, visited Tehran, corresponded with Iranian leaders, and urged Democrats and Republicans alike to adjust their Iran platforms. By framing the crisis as a human drama rather than a diplomatic imbroglio, the families helped personalise the crisis for ordinary people. Framed not just as a policy dispute, but rather a personal attack on *all* Americans, it helped create a lasting anger toward Iran that has hindered relations for a generation.

The extraordinary public diplomacy carried out by the families of the American hostages held in Iran from 1979-1981 played a pivotal role in domesticating and humanising the biggest foreign policy crisis of Jimmy Carter's presidency. The families led an unprecedented campaign both in public and behind closed doors to raise awareness of the plight of their loved ones.<sup>1</sup> They granted interviews, held press conferences, attended commemorative events, and organised public

campaigns across the country. Relatives also met with foreign leaders abroad on “person-to-person” missions, visited Tehran and met with Iranian officials in the United States, corresponded with Iran’s leaders, and urged Democrats and Republicans alike to adjust their Iran platforms. By framing the crisis primarily as a human drama rather than just a diplomatic imbroglio, the families personalised the crisis for ordinary Americans.

The Iran Hostage Crisis had begun 4 November 1979 when militant followers of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seized dozens of Americans at the United States Embassy and Iranian Foreign Ministry in Tehran.<sup>2</sup> The proximate cause was Washington’s decision to allow the deposed Iranian dictator, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, into America for medical treatment. The long-term causes stemmed from the two-and-one-half decade-long United States support for the shah, as well as the American-backed coup that deposed nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953. Regardless, on that autumn Sunday, scores of militants stormed the United States Embassy and seized the Americans inside. The final 52 hostages would not get freedom until 20 January 1981, moments after the inauguration of Ronald Reagan and the end of Carter’s career in public office. As the hostages became a media-fuelled national obsession, their families stood centre-stage.

Families’ involvement in the crisis manifested in three core ways. First, Washington-area ones positioned themselves physically in the State Department’s Operations Center, ensuring their presence would serve as a constant reminder for those working to resolve the crisis. Subsequently, a mostly symbolic and loosely organised Yellow Ribbon Campaign emerged. It staged publicity-seeking events featuring ribbon-hanging ceremonies to commemorate the hostages. Finally, the need for an effective response to media demands led prominent hostage

families to establish the Family Liaison Action Group [FLAG]. Each of these aspects overlapped with the others to a considerable degree; together they warrant further scrutiny.

The literature on the crisis is voluminous.<sup>3</sup> The consensus is that Khomeini, in whose name the youthful hostage-takers claimed to act, bore ultimately responsibility. Although likely uninformed about the embassy seizure beforehand, he later supported the action. Locked in an internal power struggle with competing factions following the ouster of the shah, Khomeini used the hostages as a tool to unite various factions around the powerful symbol of anti-Americanism. As such, the hostages' release in January 1981 came only after a failed American rescue attempt, many fits and starts during Algerian-mediated negotiations, and, decisively, Iraq's September 1980 invasion of Iran, which led Tehran to seek international support.

Yet American engagement with the Middle East has deepened since the hostages' release, spurring further examination of the domestic side of the crisis. Its power stemmed from how it contributed to and symbolised the prevalent Carter-era narrative of national economic, political, and social decline.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the crisis became nationalised: "These families represented their husbands or children; they were not the nation-state as public institution but the national community constituted through its families, and now under siege".<sup>5</sup> The news media's role as a political actor has often received comment but, frequently, less rigorous analysis.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, extant works only fleetingly address the families' role.<sup>7</sup>

This analysis emphasises the families: their interactions with American policy-makers, the media, and public and foreign officials. Families humanised the hostage drama and offer continuity from American prisoners of war [POWS] and those missing in action [MIA] in the Vietnam War, the 1980s Western hostage crisis in Lebanon, and the Iran-Contra Scandal. The personalisation of the crisis rendered it tangible to the American public, encouraging an

emotional connexion to the hostages and, thus, to Carter Administration efforts toward their release. Moreover, the centrality of the families in public representations of the crisis helped harden American attitudes toward Iran: not merely an outgrowth of a diplomatic dispute, it represented a sort of personal violence toward individual Americans and their families. The hostage episode remains significant because it, and the revolution that spawned it, has framed American relations with Iran since 1979.<sup>8</sup>

The Yellow Ribbon Campaign and FLAG were designed, respectively, to garner public and media attention, and manage relations with the press. To that end, the news media emerges as a singularly influential domestic actor in this episode. Moreover, women – mostly wives, but also mothers and daughters – constituted the vast majority of family members regularly cited in news coverage. Women also occupied a sizeable leadership role within organised family activities during the crisis. Most Yellow Ribbon Campaign events had women at the centre: the wives and mothers of hostages, as well as the wives of elected officials. Inside FLAG, the leadership of State Department wives mitigated the fiercest criticism aimed at the Administration. It also allowed State Department families to assert primacy in message management. Accustomed to a diplomatic approach and demonstrating public fealty to government policy, State Department spouses mitigated the fiercest family criticism by exerting control over the narrative.

The Carter Administration recognised that the families could have a powerful effect on public discourse and diplomacy. Policy-makers, including the president, two successive secretaries of state, assistant and deputy secretaries of state, and National Security Council [NSC] and White House staff frequently engaged with the families. Carter confessed that the “hostages sometimes seemed like part of my own family”. “I knew and had grown to love some

of the members of their families, and had visited with them in Washington and even in their hometowns around the country”, he noted.<sup>9</sup> The first aspect of the families’ involvement began within days of the embassy takeover. Relatives of hostages gained office space at the State Department’s Operations Center, adjacent to the specially convened Iran Working Group [IWG] dedicated to resolving the crisis. From the start, Washington-area families worked to co-ordinate communications with those outside the region, keep abreast of developments, and ensure that Washington, the press, and public remembered the hostages’ plight.

The State Department immediately saw the advantages of keeping them close. “Rightly or wrongly, we decided that we were not going to have a repetition of Vietnam’s family group[s]”, some of which had turned publicly against government policy, said Sheldon Krys, the Foreign Service officer appointed the families’ liaison.<sup>10</sup> For Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders, it made sense because “the moment any family felt that information was being withheld was the moment it began seeking other channels to make feelings heard – calls to congressmen, talking to the press, seeking their own organizational outlet”.<sup>11</sup>

In the first six months, State Department officials established one-to-one contact by representatives phoning families about twice per week, noting each contact on cards for each family. Three times in that period, the Administration paid to fly two members from each family to attend briefings. Representatives also held regional meetings with hostages’ kin, with pay and allowances routed to families.<sup>12</sup> Some relatives, such as children of hostage William Keough, also met with the Iranian *charges d’affaires* in Washington in the crisis’ opening weeks.<sup>13</sup>

Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance made unannounced appearances at the first meeting with families on 8 November 1979. Press Secretary Jody Powell already believed the families could play a critical role in shaping public opinion and, according to White House

political aide Hamilton Jordan, “give the president more time” to resolve the crisis.<sup>14</sup> “You know, I’ve been worried all week about the hostages as a problem for the country and as a political problem for me”, Jordan quoted the president as saying. “But it wasn’t until I saw the grief and hope on the faces of their wives and mothers and fathers that I felt the personal responsibility for their lives”.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski refused to meet the families “in order not to be swayed by emotions”.<sup>16</sup>

In an early meeting, State Department officials relayed a statement by a hostage, Bruce Laingen, the *chargé d’affaires* in Tehran, emphasising that the hostages relied on the families’ strength.<sup>17</sup> Later, Laingen suggested they wade into the energy debate. “It occurs to us that another way in which these families can act constructively while they endure the agonizing wait for the hostages’ safe return would be to make some kind of direct nationwide appeal for energy conservation”, he cabled from Tehran. “A public appeal from them in the current atmosphere could carry great weight . . . . It could take a variety of forms, from a simple public statement endorsing the President’s call, to a publicity drive in local communities, to a bumper sticker campaign”.<sup>18</sup> This suggestion indicates that some hostages felt comfortable asking their families to engage in public diplomacy.

The following month, Carter told the families that he had warned Iran that he would impose harsh sanctions if Tehran followed through on its threat to put the hostages on trial.<sup>19</sup> “We know that some of you have differences and grievances that you are repressing”, Vance’s talking points advised him to say in an early meeting. “We don’t quarrel with your right to have a different perspective on events, but we are grateful for your continued forbearance and your understanding of the need for all of us to stand together”.<sup>20</sup>

The Administration sometimes invoked the families' suffering to buttress its negotiating position. For example, in December 1979, the speaker of Iran's Parliament [*Majlis*], Hashemi Rafsanjani floated the possibility that the families might visit the hostages for Christmas. However, the hostage-takers rejected the proposal. The United States chided Iran for "offering false hopes" to the families.<sup>21</sup> Shortly afterward, the State Department tasked a group of psychologists to report on the strain on the families. Although officials did not foresee releasing the report publicly, Saunders suggested the results could be part of "a discreet approach to the Iranians to assist the process of expediting release".<sup>22</sup> Later, writing to Prime Minister Mohammad-Ali Rajai, Edmund Muskie, Vance's successor, appealed for the return of the hostages to their families.<sup>23</sup> In response, Rajai called for an American "confession" of, and "repentance" for, past "sins" in Iran.<sup>24</sup> Regardless, these examples indicate willingness to wield the moral force of the families as a tool in negotiations.

The families did not always stay united, however. In early meetings, "there was frequently a sharp display of hostility toward the government for their plight and for the failure to produce a prompt solution", according to Saunders.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the crisis, military families tended to be more critical than those from the State Department, with some demanding action from the beginning.<sup>26</sup> "Nothing is perfect and we were dealing with a lot of different people from across America in almost any circumstance that you can imagine and that was somewhere caught up in those 250-some-odd" relatives, Krys admitted.<sup>27</sup>

The second major aspect of family involvement began with the loosely organised, but highly symbolic, Yellow Ribbon Campaign. It started in autumn 1979. A reporter accompanied Penelope [Penne] Laingen, whose husband, Bruce, was the most senior hostage, as she tied a yellow ribbon around a tree outside her Maryland home. Soon, yellow ribbons festooned trees,



car antennae, front porches, and schools across the country as Americans showed solidarity with their compatriots held in Tehran.<sup>28</sup> Private citizens formed the Yellow Ribbon Campaign in which hostage families played high-profile roles. The campaign gathered pace in early 1980. In January, families tied 50 yellow ribbons on the National Christmas Tree as part of a “rededication”.<sup>29</sup> In Virginia, a women’s organisation distributed 900 yards of yellow ribbons to locals to hang on oak trees.<sup>30</sup> Later, Congress tied yellow ribbons around an oak dedicated to the hostages – a gesture repeated across the country.<sup>31</sup>

As symbols, yellow ribbons took on tremendous power. The ribbons even reached Tehran through the mail that the militants intermittently delivered to the hostages.<sup>32</sup> State Department officials also highlighted the popularity of the Yellow Ribbon Campaign to hostages holed up in Iran’s Foreign Ministry.<sup>33</sup> Upon their release in January 1981, the first hostages off the plane in Algiers donned yellow ribbons in their hair.<sup>34</sup> As one scholar has phrased it, the ribbons “came to represent not just a foreign policy, but the nation itself” because the hostages were victims, whose only crime was their citizenship.<sup>35</sup>

After the hostages’ release, the National Football League draped a giant yellow bow on the Louisiana Superdome, the site of the Super Bowl, to welcome them home. The pre-game ceremony honoured the hostages and ushers handed spectators ribbons to wave during the game, creating an undulating sea of yellow for the cameras.<sup>36</sup> The New York City Ballet introduced yellow ribbons into its performances.<sup>37</sup> At least half a dozen former hostages threw out first pitches to start the 1981 baseball season.<sup>38</sup> New York was amongst the cities to stage ticker-tape parades to celebrate their release.<sup>39</sup> When the hostages returned to their homes, a newspaper reported, they “ripped yellow ribbons from trees in their very own front yards”.<sup>40</sup>

Regardless, as 1979 gave way to 1980, the government stepped up its efforts to keep the families close. To that end, the IWG institutionalised weekly mailings of packets of relevant news items to the families.<sup>41</sup> The push came amid worries that the families might publicly oppose the government. “No matter what or when the outcome of the situation, we stand as an administration to bear the brunt of the outpourings of whatever feelings have developed over time”, Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron warned the NSC’s Gary Sick.<sup>42</sup>

Some White House advisers saw the families as a bellwether for congressional support and public opinion. Richard Moe, Vice-President Walter Mondale’s chief of staff, warned that some families were becoming “increasingly frustrated and letting it be known publicly”. He suggested that Carter call the families on Christmas to “reassure them that he and the country are thinking of them on this special occasion”. Such a gesture might help quell criticism, Moe believed. “This is a worthwhile effort . . . because if we ever get an avalanche of critical comments from the families, that will obviously encourage others on the Hill, the campaign trail and elsewhere to follow suit”, he wrote, “and we could suddenly find ourselves under tremendous public pressure to do something we don’t want to do”.<sup>43</sup> Days later, Carter and Vance sent telegrams to the families for Christmas.<sup>44</sup>

The third phase of the families’ involvement – characterised by activism and manifested most clearly in the establishment of FLAG – emerged when two issues came together in early 1980. First, the crisis showed no sign of a quick resolution as the New Year dawned. Not coincidentally, anger over Administration policy increasingly surfaced publicly, making it clear the families lacked a single message. As one analyst notes, “Terrorists are delighted when relatives of hostages pressure and berate their governments”.<sup>45</sup> Such criticism concerned the

Administration because it threatened to undercut fragile public support and embolden the hostage-takers.

Frustration emerged publicly in early 1980. The mother of a Marine hostage wrote to Carter at least twice to urge him to apologise on behalf of the United States “for any wrongs we have done to hurt” Iran.<sup>46</sup> Hostage Bruce German wrote to the *Washington Post* imploring the media to step in where politicians had failed. “Even though our situation is obviously an issue in the current political campaign, perhaps the press, in general, and your newspaper in particular, will be more effective than the politicians”, German wrote.<sup>47</sup> His wife, Bonnie, called for a congressional investigation of America actions in Iran as a means of expediting the hostages’ release.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Bonnie Graves, the wife of hostage John Graves, condemned the White House and State Department.<sup>49</sup> Others followed suit.<sup>50</sup>

In March 1980, a hostage’s daughter criticised American actions in a letter to Iranian President Abol Hassan. “We realize that the U.S. government, among others, committed . . . offenses in the past, and more particularly, in Iran throughout the ex-shah’s regime”, read the letter, which was signed “From all my people”.<sup>51</sup> But many families disagreed with the letter, which served as the immediate catalyst for the formation of FLAG. “Some thought establishing cohesiveness among the families might prevent individual actions that most of the families saw as harmful”, Saunders believed.<sup>52</sup> Around that time, Khomeini announced that the impending *Majlis* would decide the fate of the captives. The families realised their ordeal might last indefinitely.

Thus, encouraged by the remnants of Vietnam War-era POW/MIA family organisations, the wives of several Foreign Service Officers formed and steered the direction of FLAG in March 1980.<sup>53</sup> “The media demands and other aspects of the situation had literally overtaken us”,

co-founder Katherine Keough reflected.<sup>54</sup> The group began to hold meetings; write, publish, and distribute a newsletter; establish a telephone tree; organise public events, including the Yellow Ribbon Campaign and lapel pin distribution; and participate “in efforts to resolve the crisis”.<sup>55</sup> FLAG would “educate the general public about the international crisis caused by the taking of hostages” and “assist in resolving that crisis by seeking the release of the Hostages by means consistent with United States law and policy”.<sup>56</sup>

“As a group . . . we will have more influence on public opinion”, FLAG wrote in its inaugural newsletter. “FLAG can be decisive in communicating to Iran that the American public will no longer tolerate their actions”.<sup>57</sup> It also reserved the right to criticise its own government. “It wasn’t that we were going against the government . . . but we had to have that option if we wanted to”, Penne Laingen said.<sup>58</sup> To be sure, the families grew more willing to air their grievances as the crisis continued. The White House and State Department collaborated to keep the families involved, but the relatives of Foreign Service Officers became more critical of the latter’s efforts whilst staying mostly respectful of the White House.<sup>59</sup>

Most American officials viewed the establishment of FLAG as a “constructive” and “beneficial” step that would emphasise the humanitarian aspect of the crisis.<sup>60</sup> Not everyone shared that feeling. “The Defense Department had had great difficulty working with the Vietnam POW family organization and was initially very reluctant to see FLAG organized”, according to Saunders. Pentagon officials, however, soon became converts when they saw the group’s potential to boost morale and publicity.<sup>61</sup> “The importance of this cooperative relationship can be underscored only when one imagines what it would have been like had the families been in open and vocal opposition to the government”, Saunders believed.<sup>62</sup>

Yet amicability did not always characterise the relationship. For instance, the families overwhelmingly opposed the Administration decision to admit the shah into the United States for medical treatment and, in March 1980, FLAG threatened to object “strongly and publicly” should the United States re-admit him. FLAG’s directors unanimously resolved that the United States “should have nothing to do with the Shah under any circumstances”.<sup>63</sup> The families warned the White House they would push back if they felt it in their interests. “We cannot stress enough to you how insensitive we feel our Government is to the feelings of the hostage families and to the American people, when the lives of our loved ones are still very much in jeopardy”, read FLAG’s letter signed by members of 47 families. “We have been instrumental in keeping the American people calm and restrained these past difficult months in order to give our Government time to work through their delicate negotiations. We now question the wisdom of our restraint”, it cautioned.<sup>64</sup>

The Vietnam War-era POW/MIA family groups lent support to the families’ efforts.<sup>65</sup> In September 1980, No Greater Love, an organisation started for POW/MIA children from the war, sponsored a large ceremony in Washington for the hostages and their families. The group also backed the Pin Project, which provided 10,000 pins decorated with yellow ribbons in honour of the hostages. No Greater Love mobilised allies to distribute thousands of pins to union members, college students, and, in a stroke of marketing genius, TV weather forecasters.<sup>66</sup> In November, a “Free the American Hostages Rally” occurred in Florida. Organisers billed it as a “non-political benefit” for a local hospital “Honoring American hostages, P.O.W.s and M.I.A.s”.<sup>67</sup>

FLAG co-ordinated regional campaigns, which encouraged businesses to manufacture, for example, bumper stickers to raise public awareness. It also arranged to send family members to each state to hold yellow ribbon-tying ceremonies.<sup>68</sup> In the final months of the crisis, FLAG

organised the distribution of 3,000 bumper stickers to Foreign Services posts overseas, as well as the purchase of 5,400 “Free the Hostages” pins from No Greater Love for distribution to FLAG members and prominent citizens.<sup>69</sup>

The establishment of FLAG as the most visible organisational platform for the families ensured a streamlined process for communication and public activism. But it did not only serve as a family support group, neither did its set-up merely serve to pressure the Administration. It also gave the impression of a more unified position held by the families than actually existed. The fiercest criticism of American policy did not emanate from FLAG leaders, but rather from hostage relatives outside the group. FLAG, instead, provided a platform for the public leadership and primacy of State Department families.

The drama seemed tailor-made for news outlets because it allowed them to domesticate a major foreign policy story. It simultaneously served as an international story, and a local one, as outlets covered the families. “It was the biggest story around, an international story, and with a built-in local angle”, one Washington news producer said. “What could have been more perfect?”<sup>70</sup> It was also a political story – a manifestation of a diminished nation, led by an uninspiring president. It became a prominent feature of nearly every newscast and newspaper.

The families, especially those who believed their role to be the promotion of public awareness, increased news reporters’ points of contact. Some relatives even became national figures. “Through default some came to function as newsmakers, others as commentators”, one analyst writes. “Reporters could always count on a fuller response to new developments in Tehran from . . . the wife of the embassy’s consul general than they could get from any State Department spokesman”.<sup>71</sup> In this way, FLAG served as a rapid-response unit for quote-hungry journalists.

Iran coverage saturated news viewers.<sup>72</sup> In the first six months, the major networks devoted nearly one-third of their news time to the crisis.<sup>73</sup> As the crisis continued, CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite solemnly intoned at the end of every broadcast the number of days of the hostages capture.<sup>74</sup> The crisis spawned an ABC news magazine that evolved into “Nightline”, which became the longest-running late-night news programme on American television. In its first months, “Nightline” sometimes even topped the venerable “Tonight Show” in head-to-head ratings. Aptly, “Nightline’s” first report featured a dramatic confrontation between a hostage’s wife and an Iranian diplomat.<sup>75</sup>

The coverage reflected a shift in the way American media covered the news. As epitomised by “Nightline”, television news coverage had become increasingly entertainment-oriented. Outlets saw that “soft news” – “a set of story characteristics, including sensationalized presentation, human-interest themes, emphasis on dramatic subject matter and the absence of a public policy component” – could attract new consumers.<sup>76</sup> News outlets used the families’ concerns to incorporate human-interest angles into their daily stories, widening the appeal of their coverage.

Celebrity-focused publications like *People*, moreover, ran several stories on the emotional toll the crisis took on the families.<sup>77</sup> Psychologist Charles Figley, head of a government task force on the mental health of the families, was quoted as saying they were “suffering a great deal more” than the hostages themselves. In an example of the “nationalization” of the crisis, Figley added, “All of us are survivors of this. We’ve been traumatized as a nation”.<sup>78</sup> In a cover story on the hostages’ return, mass-market weekly *Reader’s Digest* said, “Our hostages were home – and we were one again”.<sup>79</sup> Coverage of the families, thus, offered an opportunity to transcend standard “hard”, policy-oriented news

coverage. By re-enforcing the sense of crisis and Americans being under attack in Tehran, it helped harden American attitudes toward Iran. “The hostage thing was a human issue, Americans were being held, and the whole country became more or less riveted on it, helped enormously by the media”, noted State Department spokesman John Trattner. “And the media themselves were at hair trigger. They were terrified that somebody else would get the latest hostage story first”.<sup>80</sup>

Hostage relatives also helped journalists make the crisis accessible for audiences. Barbara Rosen, the wife of another hostage, Barry Rosen, felt her media appearances might help if they ended up “reaching Iranian wives and mothers”. She believed that “publicity might offer some protection” for her husband. Not only would it pressure the hostage-takers, it “might even protect against our own government . . . . If hostages became individuals, it might be less easy to sacrifice them in pursuit of a larger national objective”.<sup>81</sup> The NSC encouraged families to grant interviews to government-funded Voice of America’s Farsi-language broadcasts in Iran because such a “humanitarian appeal will be helpful with the Iranian middle class that follows our broadcasts”.<sup>82</sup>

The Iranian Revolution and hostage crisis provided a new forum in which the American media presented stereotyped, “orientalised” images of gender in the Middle East.<sup>83</sup> Yet with the involvement of the families, the crisis increasingly took on a gendered hue on the domestic front, too.<sup>84</sup> News outlets focused overwhelmingly on women in their heart-wrenching coverage of families. Coverage transmitted the menace of the foreign threat through tropes of suffering women left behind whilst their sons and husbands served their country. This dynamic permeated many aspects of the crisis. When a Texas-based Iranian woman contacted the families in July 1980 to offer her support for the captives and opposition to the hostage-takers, she specifically



mentioned her place within her family. “As a wife and mother, I think I understand your pain and sorrow”, she wrote. “More than once I’ve cried while watching interviews involving some of you talking about your relatives in Tehran”.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, women occupied most of FLAG’s leadership positions. Upon its founding, the entire elected nine-person leadership team consisted of women.<sup>86</sup> When the board expanded in August 1980, women filled three of the five new positions.<sup>87</sup> Co-founder Keough described FLAG’s daily activities mostly in terms of “wives” and “mothers” of hostages. “For wives, their greatest fears came true at 2:00 a.m. – will he [as a hostage] be changed? Will he be so badly hurt in some way that it will never be the same for us again? Will he still love me? And, thinking the unthinkable, will he come back alive?” Keough described the mothers of hostages, who “called during the day when their husbands were at work so they wouldn’t hear the crying”. Despite the emphasis on wives, she added fleetingly that the “frustration and failure” was visible “in its most devastating form on the faces . . . of the fathers in our group”.<sup>88</sup>

This gendered dynamic reached officialdom. In May 1980, FLAG and First Lady Rosalynn Carter launched a national campaign on behalf of the first ladies of all 50 states to affirm their commitment to the safe return of the hostages. On the White House grounds, Carter and Penne Laingen tied a ribbon around a tree on the North Lawn whilst, on the same day, first ladies in several states on their governors’ mansion grounds made similar gestures.<sup>89</sup>

The crisis nearly came to a head in April 1980 after Carter severed diplomatic relations and announced sanctions against Iran. Three notable events occurred. The first two consisted of separate, and very different, foreign trips by family members that deepened public divisions. The third constituted a failed United States Special Forces rescue attempt, which occurred whilst the relatives were overseas. The first overseas trip came from the mother of a captive Marine.

Barbara Timm bucked Administration wishes and travelled to Tehran. Mother and son met inside the embassy compound. She did not request her son's release, insisting that she only came to visit and would not discuss politics. Whilst in Tehran, she said she would push for a congressional investigation into American actions there.<sup>90</sup> The journey did not technically violate an American ban on travel by non-journalists to Iran, the State Department said, because the restrictions would take effect the day after the Timm's departure. But it triggered consternation and debate amongst the families, many of whom had formed FLAG to project a unified front. FLAG chose its words carefully but made clear it believed Timm had erred.<sup>91</sup> Subsequently, the State Department reiterated that the White House strongly discouraged relatives travelling to Iran but that it would review, if necessary, "on a case-by-case basis" requests for exceptions to passport regulations.<sup>92</sup> However, the Administration stepped lightly. Whilst seeking to keep Americans out of Iran for security and political reasons, it did not want to appear outright to oppose visits from families.

The second trip received backing from the Administration, though Carter made clear that FLAG members who travelled to Europe did so as an "independent" initiative not as official representatives.<sup>93</sup> Several women – Pearl Golacinski, Barbara Rosen, Jeanne Queen, and Louisa Kennedy – met national leaders and rallied support for harsh sanctions against Iran. Kennedy, the wife of hostage Moorhead Kennedy, said the trip was a "'people to people' effort intended to sensitize the Europeans to the plight of the hostages". The envoys mostly steered away from politics and, whilst not always praising the president, did not criticise Carter directly.

The women first met with French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in Paris. Although not receiving Giscard's support for sanctions, Kennedy said they had "come away knowing we have the full support of the people of France".<sup>94</sup> The Administration recognised that the person-

to-person option could have advantages. For instance, Giscard later told American officials that Soviet and Polish authorities might undertake a *démarche* to Iran “if such a step was requested of them by the families of the hostages”. Saunders relayed the suggestion to FLAG, urging it “to make an appeal for effective support” at their embassies in the United States.<sup>95</sup>

In Bonn, Barbara Rosen conferred with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who advised not to speak publicly against Carter. “Do everything you can to influence, but do not oppose”, she quoted him as saying.<sup>96</sup> The mother of hostage Richard Queen met Italian officials in Rome. “I did not come in the name of any government, but only as a human being, a mother who is trying to do everything that is possible to free her son”, she said.<sup>97</sup> Louisa Kennedy met Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in London. In a telephone conversation beforehand, Carter emphasised that the women were travelling in a private capacity. “They are going on their own, not as a delegate from me”, Carter told her. The British leader replied that she could “understand their concern”.<sup>98</sup> Kennedy said she received “wonderful warmth, wonderful support” from Thatcher and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie.<sup>99</sup>

In a message delivered to the European Economic Community, the women said the crisis “speaks to the family of nations who are all effectively held hostage”. They emphasised their common humanity. “We ask for a ‘people-to-people’ bond – our appeal is not just to the heads of state but to the families of Europe – families, like us, who, we pray, will never have to bear the pain of what we feel daily”, the statement said.<sup>100</sup> Later, the women received an audience with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.<sup>101</sup> FLAG felt their sojourn was so successful that they mulled a similar trip to Asian capitals in time for the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.<sup>102</sup> Although that trip never occurred, FLAG did send a missive to the summit.<sup>103</sup>

The envoys did not receive support from European states for strong sanctions against Iran, but Carter seemed pleased and encouraged FLAG's activities. FLAG also seemed positive.<sup>104</sup> On balance, however, the families concluded that going forward the crisis should be "removed from public attention".<sup>105</sup> The decision to pursue the quiet approach followed the failed rescue attempt. Although the rescue debacle occurred when the families were overseas, it did not significantly complicate either initiative. The families had generally opposed a military rescue because of the risks posed to the hostages.<sup>106</sup> But Carter made the decision after a series of meetings in March and April. The pivotal meeting, not coincidentally, came whilst Vance was away.<sup>107</sup> Officials knew of his opposition to any action that might imperil the negotiations and endanger the hostages. When he discovered the plan, Vance tendered his resignation, effective after the operation, regardless of outcome.<sup>108</sup>

The military operation, codenamed Operation Eagle Claw, ended in disaster. The officer leading the mission aborted the rescue due to equipment malfunction whilst in a remote Iranian desert location. Whilst refuelling, two aircraft slammed into each other, killing eight servicemen.<sup>109</sup> Subsequently, the Carter Administration sought to keep the issue out of the headlines so as not to appear to be politicising the crisis.<sup>110</sup> In a discussion paper, the IWG proposed a cautious public-affairs strategy with a key role for the families. The State Department sought to "encourage progressive improvements in the conditions of the hostages – beginning with regular visits and messages for families – with the purpose of working toward a more active official Iranian involvement". The Administration "should consider family visits as a means of increasing this form of pressure on Iran".<sup>111</sup>

A meeting with Katherine Keough and Louisa Kennedy in July 1980 appears to be the first time that Carter suggested, "the hostage families could be more fully used as a people-to-

people channel to Iran”. The women expressed scepticism to Muskie about visiting Iran “until the situation has clarified”.<sup>112</sup> Any initiative would seek the hostages’ freedom. “The possibility of an initiative is now actively being explored”, Brzezinski informed Carter.<sup>113</sup>

A memorandum that Muskie sent Carter in late summer captures Administration frustration: “As the results of . . . probes [to the militants] begin coming in, we will sharpen specific initiatives of our own, such as hostage family and Congressional contacts with the Iranians”.<sup>114</sup> Alongside this point, Carter scrawled, “Why wait”? Muskie added that, “as you instructed”, he would discuss with FLAG a proposed meeting with “some Iranians”. “We will be working out separately possible ways for them to conduct their own appeals and probes for possible contact which might open the door to the hostages being turned over to their families”. In a sign of his sense of urgency, Carter minuted, “All of this should be pursued aggressively and without delay”. Muskie also informed the president that the families had just sent a letter to Ahmed Khomeini, son of the ayatollah and an interlocutor between the militants and his father. “They could send a follow-on message either to Ahmed Khomeini or to [Chief Justice Mohammad] Beheshti or perhaps copies to both introducing the idea of contact between the hostage families and an appropriate Iranian group, and possibly a visit by a family delegation to Iran”. That piqued the president’s interest. At the end of the 12-page memo, Carter wrote, “Put this *now* into action. Give me a plan – step-by-step with dates, for implementation”.

In August, FLAG resolved to send another letter “as part of an appeal to humanitarian concerns”, this time to the *Majlis*, Rajai, and Ayatollah Khomeini. They also prepared to send a delegation to Tehran.<sup>115</sup> Muskie reassured families that he understood their “fears” and “frustration”. He wanted “to listen”, urge the families to “keep the faith”, and reassure them that the State Department was “constantly working” on the situation.<sup>116</sup> The White House

encouraged FLAG's letter but sought to keep its fingerprints off it. Saunders approved the letter's text during a drafting session. He did not make suggestions, however, on content. He "urged only that the writers not lock themselves into any position". According to Saunders, the letter's intent was to "simply put forward another instrument that the Iranians might find useful when they are ready to consider release of the hostages".<sup>117</sup>

The letter focused on the families' suffering, their sympathy for Iranians, and their willingness to visit Tehran: "We are writing to you at this time, too, with the idea that there might be some way in which the hostages' families could participate personally and directly in the solution of the problem which now divides the Iranian and American people". "Might we be the bridge that brings the hostages home?" Members of 52 families signed it.<sup>118</sup> The letter, delivered to Rafsanjani via the Algerian Embassy in Tehran, was read to the *Majlis* but received no reply.<sup>119</sup> The initiative, never fully fleshed out, was dead.

In October 1980, FLAG's Keough met with Rajai in Washington.<sup>120</sup> FLAG said the meeting "was of a substantive nature" but did not release details. The State Department reiterated, "It was a private initiative. There was no [United States Government] involvement". According to Saunders, Keough did not detail her conversation. However, she reported that Rajai dampened hopes that "the hostage families might provide a 'bridge' in resolving the problem". Instead, he said the "problem would be solved 'diplomatically.'"<sup>121</sup> Undeterred, Keough met with Khaled Al-Shamarani, Iran's United Nations representative, in December. He told her that arrangements would soon occur "for the hostages to communicate with their families". Though short on specifics, he promised, "It will all be over soon".<sup>122</sup> Keough later spoke with Rajai by telephone, "The main topics of conversation have been the suffering of family members in the

United States, the need to improve communication with the hostages, in particular direct telephone calls, and, of course, the need to release the hostages”.<sup>123</sup>

The families did not merely conduct international diplomacy. In July, two FLAG leaders urged both the Democratic and Republican parties to strengthen their platforms on Iran. “Those closest to the tragedy . . . the hostages and their families . . . have perhaps the greatest obligation to demonstrate both realism and decency toward the Iranians”, they argued. “However, we must in no way suggest that the United States will blithely forget the grievous act perpetrated against our fellow Americans”.<sup>124</sup>

The families generally, and FLAG specifically, left their most lasting legacy in lobbying for compensation for the hostages and their dependents. Initially, debate centred on whether the hostages and their families could bring lawsuits against the Iranian government. Yet “a substantial majority” of the families dropped any such notion when it looked like Iranian objections might delay the hostages’ release.<sup>125</sup> After hostage repatriation, diplomats similarly defended the provisions of the Algiers Agreements – the accords that ended the crisis – that prevented the hostages and their families from pursuing legal cases against Iran in American courts or in the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal.<sup>126</sup>

Before the hostages’ release, however, American officials occasionally mulled paying off the families to keep them on the government’s side. After the failed rescue attempt, Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner wondered whether the “cash register could start ringing” for the families with whom he had recently had a contentious meeting. Perhaps an initial payment of US\$50,000 per family, he suggested, and US\$1,000 per day of captivity, with the money drawn from Iranian assets. The others present demurred.<sup>127</sup> Sick opposed the “cash register approach”. For the IWG, paying the families did not constitute the best way forward.<sup>128</sup>

Yet the families lobbied for effective legislation. With the assistance of Washington legal firm Covington and Burling, FLAG actively supported the 1980 *Hostage Relief Act* intended “to provide certain benefits to individuals held hostage in Iran” and others in similar situations. The benefits, mostly related to education and healthcare, extended to the hostages’ children and spouses. Similar legislation existed in the past for members of the military, but this was the first such legislation to apply to civilians.<sup>129</sup>

In meetings with Administration figures, including Carter and Muskie, relatives prodded them to “expedite” the hostage bill.<sup>130</sup> Three spouses – Gisela Ahern, Louisa Kennedy, and Katherine Keough – testified before a congressional subcommittee on behalf of the bill. FLAG only believed the bill to be “an interim measure”, Kennedy insisted. “I hope no impression will be created that FLAG regards the provisions of the bill as entailing adequate compensation for the injuries the hostages and their families have suffered and are suffering. We do not”. FLAG notched a significant victory by successfully lobbying for the bill to cover non-federal employees amongst the hostages.<sup>131</sup> Carter signed the bill into law in October, although its provisions expired in 1983.

Unable to sue Iran for damages, the hostages and their families turned to their government for compensation. Although the President’s Commission on Hostage Compensation recommended that the hostages and families receive compensation of US\$12.50 for every day in captivity, neither that sum nor subsequent proposals cleared congressional committees.<sup>132</sup> Later, Keough suggested that at least US\$192.50 per day of captivity would suffice. That sum, she noted archly, corresponded to the amount paid to the members of the President’s Commission.<sup>133</sup>

The influence of FLAG and the hostages’ families should not be over-stated. Ultimately, their efforts did little to influence the timing and nature of the hostages’ release. The militants,



and their *de facto* leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, had their own agenda. The hostages remained in captivity until their usefulness as a cudgel in Iranian domestic politics had run its course. Yet neither should the families' legacy be summarily dismissed. Late in the crisis, the NSC judged that the families had played a significant role in the crisis. Sick noted that FLAG's efforts "successfully emphasized the humanitarian interest in release of the hostages and provided important moral support to the deeply concerned families around the country".<sup>134</sup>

Thirty-six years after the crisis began, the 2015 *Justice for United States Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Act* entitled each of the hostages or their estates to be eligible to receive up to US\$4.4 million. Specifically, each hostage or their descendants could apply for US\$10,000 per day of captivity, or their spouses and children US\$600,000. The money would not come from Iran but, rather, from a US\$9 billion penalty incurred by the French bank, BNP Paribas, for sanctions violations.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, in response to a spate of abductions of Americans abroad, Washington announced significant changes to hostage policy in a specific effort to "improve" government "interaction and communication with families". It established a Family Engagement Team headed by a Family Engagement Co-ordinator as a permanent, senior position.<sup>136</sup> Whilst the Iran hostage families did not cause the policy shift directly, their efforts helped change the way the government, media, and public think of hostage-takings abroad.

FLAG soon disbanded. In gratitude for the eight servicemen killed in the failed rescue attempt, it donated its remaining resources to the establishment of the Special Operations Warriors Fund for families in 1995.<sup>137</sup> Yellow ribbons, which became a national sensation during the crisis, have since become a symbol through which families show their determination to be reunited after war or other separation.<sup>138</sup>

Predictably, the Tehran drama became inextricably wrapped up in the 1980 presidential race. The Ronald Reagan Republican campaign's accusations that Carter played politics with the hostages rankled the president, who told families such charges were "false and ridiculous".<sup>139</sup> Still, the political lessons of the crisis helped define Reagan's presidency, feeding his determination to avoid his predecessor's fate after abductions of Americans in Lebanon.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, Reagan's meetings with families of captive Americans catalysed his "obsession" with trying to free "my hostages", leading to the Iran-Contra Affair and a blight on his presidency.<sup>141</sup> The families' activism served to remind the American people and the world of the captives' plight, pressure the Carter Administration, and provide a "human bridge" to Iran. Whilst the Administration never publicly complained about the families, they nevertheless served to bring unique emotional weight to bear on the president. Yet, at times, the Administration also showed a willingness to encourage, though not direct, the families to engage in political and diplomatic initiatives.

The hostage episode remains significant because it, and the revolution it spawned, framed American-Iranian relations for more than three decades.<sup>142</sup> The families' efforts are relevant because they link the domestic responses to many of the most controversial American foreign policies of the past 40 years: the war in Vietnam, Iran-Contra, the first Gulf War, the "war on terrorism", the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and non-intervention in the Syrian civil war.<sup>143</sup> Images from Tehran and their stateside analogues – the families – inundated mass audiences. Military and political alliances no longer determined America's relationship with Iran; it was now about individuals. The crisis "removed foreign policy from the hands of professionals, and dictated that Iran was a domestic political concern" for Americans.<sup>144</sup> The focus on the families helped generate intensely personal interest in the crisis. Framed not just as a policy dispute, but rather a

personal attack on *all* Americans, it helped create a lasting, searing anger toward Iran that has hindered relations for a generation.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Sixty-two Americans were detained in the embassy; three others were confined to the Iranian Foreign Ministry until two weeks before their release. Thirteen hostages were freed a few weeks into the crisis, and another after three months. For a complete list, see “The Hostages and the Casualties”, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA [JCL]: [https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/list\\_of\\_hostages.phtml](https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/list_of_hostages.phtml).

<sup>2</sup> The hostages included Foreign Service diplomats and other government employees, as well as military personnel and one private citizen.

<sup>3</sup> Useful analyses of the hostage crisis include James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (London, 1988); Mark Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in the West’s War with Militant Islam* (London, 2006); Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, NY, 2009), 167-86, 263-69; David Harris, *The Crisis: The President, the Prophet, and the Shah – 1979 and the Coming of Militant Islam* (NY, 2004); David Patrick Houghton, *US Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis* (Cambridge, 2001); Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America’s Tragic Encounter with Iran* (London, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America’s First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley, CA, 2001), 208.

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<sup>6</sup> David Altheide, “Iran vs. TV news: the hostage story out of context”, in William Adams, ed., *Television Coverage of the Middle East* (Norwood, NJ, 1981); Robert Donovan and Ray Scherer, *Unsilent Revolution: Television News and American Public Life, 1948-1991* (NY, 1992), 140-52; Barry Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience in Iran* (London, 1981), 337-64; Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (NY, 1981), 80-133.

<sup>7</sup> The only work addressing the families is by an insider: Harold Saunders, “Diplomacy and Pressure, November 1979-May 1980”, in Warren Christopher et al., eds., *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis* (London, 1985), 136-40.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Hurst, “The Iranian Nuclear Negotiations as a Two-Level Game: The Importance of Domestic Politics”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27/3(2016), 545-67.

<sup>9</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville, AR, 1982), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Sheldon Kryszewski interview (18 August 1994), Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training [ADST]: <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Kryszewski,%20Sheldon%20J.toc.pdf>. See Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (NY, 2014), 1-22.

<sup>11</sup> Saunders, “Diplomacy and Pressure”, 139.

<sup>12</sup> Bobbit memorandum “Hostage Families” to Cutler, 29 April 1980, JCL NLC-43-13-5-4-1.

<sup>13</sup> Allan Mayer et al, “Our People in Tehran”, *Newsweek* (31 December 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (NY, 1982), 52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>16</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (NY, 1983), 481.

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<sup>17</sup> “Notes on Briefing Session with Families”, 28 November 1979, Laingen [Bruce Laingen Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St Paul, MN] Folder: Minutes and Meeting Notes Part 2, Box 10.

<sup>18</sup> Laingen cable to Iran Working Group, 5 December 1979, Ibid. Folder: “Correspondence with dept of state”, Box 10.

<sup>19</sup> Muskie, “Iran’s Seizure of the United States Embassy”, House Foreign Affairs Committee (17, 19, and 25 February and 11 March 1980), 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session: 11.

<sup>20</sup> Draft, “Suggested Talking Points for the Secretary”, nd [circa December 1979], JCL Folder: “Iran: Update, 12/1-4/79”, Box 32, NSA – Country File.

<sup>21</sup> Report for the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Congressional Research Service, *The Iran Hostage Crisis: A Chronology of Daily Developments* (Washington, DC, 1981), 65-66. [Hereafter *Chronology*].

<sup>22</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update: February 7, 1980” to Vance, Christopher, and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-8-13-5-2.

<sup>23</sup> Clift memorandum “Updates on: 1) Greece/Cyprus and 2) Iran” to Mondale, 2 September 1980, JCL NLC-133-50-4-8-6.

<sup>24</sup> *Chronology*, 287.

<sup>25</sup> Saunders, “Diplomacy and Pressure”, 137.

<sup>26</sup> Bobbit memorandum “Hostage Families” to Cutler, 29 April 1980, JCL NLC-43-13-5-4-1; Barbara Rosen, Barry Rosen, and George Feifer, *The Destined Hour: The Hostage Crisis and One Family’s Ordeal* (NY, 1982), 234

<sup>27</sup> Krys interview, ADST.

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<sup>28</sup> Barbara Parker, “Penne Laingen’s Wait”, *Washington Post* (10 December 1979); Penelope Laingen interview (27 March 1986), ADST: <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Laingen,%20Penelope.toc.pdf>; Gerald Parsons, “How the Yellow Ribbon Became a National Folk Symbol”, *Folklife Center News*, 13/3(1991).

<sup>29</sup> Chanin memorandum “Invitation from Families of Hostages to Join Them at a ‘Rededication’ of the National Christmas Tree” to Wise and Fenderson, 28 January 1980, JCL Folder: “Iran [1]”, Box 30, Wexler Files.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Laingen, *Yellow Ribbon: The Secret Journal of Bruce Laingen* (NY, 1992), 108.

<sup>31</sup> Program, “Tree Dedication Ceremony”, 19 November 1980, JCL Folder: “Congressional Activities”, Unprocessed FLAG materials. I am grateful to Mary Ann Sweeney at the Carter Presidential Library for her help accessing these materials.

<sup>32</sup> Penne Laingen interview, ADST.

<sup>33</sup> Precht to Bruce Laingen, 10 February 1980, Laingen Folder: “Correspondence with dept of state”.

<sup>34</sup> Laingen, *Yellow Ribbon*, 26.

<sup>35</sup> Tad Tuleja, “Yellow Ribbons and the Redemption of the Past”, in Tad Tuleja, ed., *Usable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America* (Logan, UT, 1994), 311-31.

<sup>36</sup> NFL Network, “America’s Game and the Iran Hostage Crisis” (26 December 2015): <https://www.nfl.com/feature/iran>.

<sup>37</sup> “Balanchine ‘Stars and Stripes’ Hails Ex-Hostages”, *NY York Times* (26 January 1981).

<sup>38</sup> Hal Bock, “Former Hostages to be Honored by Baseball in Openers”, *Associated Press* (5 April 1981).

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<sup>39</sup> Leslie Bennetts, “Crowd’s Cheers Mingle with Just a Few Grumbles”, *NY Times* (31 January 1981).

<sup>40</sup> Sandra Saperstein, “Last Leg of the Homecoming Ends at America’s Doorsteps”, *Washington Post* (29 January 1981).

<sup>41</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update: January 12, 1980” to Vance, JCL NLC-128-8-12-12-5. See Folder: “Iran Working Group, Weekly news packets, June 30-September 21, 1980”, Voigts [Anabeth Koob Voigts Papers, Iowa Women’s Archives, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA] Box 1.

<sup>42</sup> Aaron memorandum with attachments to Sick, 23 January 1980, Folder: JCL “Iran: 1/11-31/80”, Box 30, NSA – Country.

<sup>43</sup> Moe memorandum to Jordan and Powell, 20 December 1979, JCL Folder: “Hostages in U.S. Embassy in Iran, 11/79 [CF, O/A 749] [1]”, Box 61, Powell Files.

<sup>44</sup> Carter telegram to Morefield, 22 December 1979, Vance telegram to Morefield, 23 December 1979, JCL Folder: “Special Mail”, Box 4, Morefield Files.

<sup>45</sup> Brigitte Nacos, *Terrorism and the Media* (NY, 1994), 127.

<sup>46</sup> Timm to Carter, 18 February 1980, 9 March 1980, both JCL Folder: “Hostages in U.S. Embassy in Iran, 1980, No. 1 [C/F, O/A 749] [1]”, Box 62, Powell Files.

<sup>47</sup> German to Bradlee, 9 February 1980, JCL Folder: “Iran: Update, 2/80”, Box 32, NSA – Country; Stephen Lynton, “‘Bitter’ Hostage in Iran Pleads for U.S. Action”, *Washington Post* (13 February 1980).

<sup>48</sup> Stephen Lynton, “Hostage’s Wife Asks Probe of U.S. Actions in Iran”, *Ibid.* (5 March 1980).

<sup>49</sup> Sue Warner, “Worry and Will: A Hostage’s Wife”, *Ibid.* (30 June 1980).

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Lynton, “Hostage Families: Ire, Frustration”, *Ibid.* (12 March 1980).

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<sup>51</sup> Lynton, “Hostage Kin’s Group, Born of One Furor, Caught in Another”, Ibid. (25 March 1980).

<sup>52</sup> Saunders, “Diplomacy and Pressure”, 137-38.

<sup>53</sup> Penne Laingen, ADST.

<sup>54</sup> “Statement of Katherine Keough, President, FLAG, Inc”., nd (circa 1982-1983), JCL FLAG Files.

<sup>55</sup> FLAG Inc., Minutes of Special Meeting of Board of Directors, 5 August 1980, Laingen Folder: “Family Liaison Action Group Post Hostage Crisis 1983”, Box 10.

<sup>56</sup> FLAG, Minutes of Board Meeting, 5 August 1980, *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Saunders, “Diplomacy and Pressure”, 138.

<sup>58</sup> Penne Laingen, ADST.

<sup>59</sup> Louisa Kennedy, in Morehead Kennedy, *The Ayatollah in the Cathedral: Reflections of a Hostage* (NY, 1986), 226.

<sup>60</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update: March 19, 1980” to Vance, Christopher, and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-8-14-12-3; Vance memorandum to Carter, 18 March 1980, JCL NLC-133-52-4-4-8.

<sup>61</sup> Saunders, “Diplomacy and Pressure”, 137.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>63</sup> “FLAG Minutes”, 22 March 1980, JCL Folder: “FLAG – Board of Directors Meetings”, Unprocessed FLAG materials.

<sup>64</sup> FLAG to Carter, 22 March 1980, JCL Folder: “Iran 3/80”, Box 34B, Jordan Files; Stephen Lynton, “Hostages’ Families Object to Effort on Behalf of the Shah”, *Washington Post* (24 March 1980).



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<sup>65</sup> Dominic Tierney, “Prisoner Dilemmas: The American Obsession with POWs and Hostages”, *Orbis*, 54/1(2010), 130-45.

<sup>66</sup> “Ceremony of Awareness”, 4 September 1980, Voigts Folder: “Campaigns, free the hostages pin project, undated”, Box 1.

<sup>67</sup> Posters, nd [circa October 1980], Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> FLAG Minutes, 31 May 1980, JCL Folder: “FLAG – Board of Directors Meetings”, Unprocessed FLAG materials; FLAG, Minutes of Board Meeting, 6-7 September 1980, Folder: “Family Liaison Action Group Post Hostage Crisis 1983”, Laingen Box 10.

<sup>69</sup> FLAG, Minutes of Board Meeting, 22 November 1980, *ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> Robert Hershman, “Crash course for the hostage families”, *Columbia Journalism Review* 19/6(1981), 25.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>72</sup> Monica Coscia, “The Fateful 52: How the American Media Sensationalized the Iran Hostage Crisis” (20 August 2016), E-International Relations Students.: <http://www.e-ir.info/2016/08/20/the-fateful-52-how-the-american-media-sensationalized-the-iran-hostage-crisis/>.

<sup>73</sup> Donovan and Scherer, *Unsilent Revolution*, 141-42.

<sup>74</sup> Ellen Goodman, “Walter Cronkite and the Iranian Hostage Crisis”, *Washington Post* (17 June 1980).

<sup>75</sup> John Giuffo, “Nightline is spawned out of the hostage crisis”, *Columbia Journalism Review* 40/4(2001).

<sup>76</sup> Matthew Baum, “Circling the Wagons: Soft News and Isolationism in American Public Opinion”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 48/2(2004), 315.

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<sup>77</sup> Linda Witt, “When the Hostages Come Home, Their Problems will Hardly be Over, a Psychologist Warns”, *People* (25 March 1980): <http://people.com/archive/when-the-hostages-come-home-their-problems-will-hardly-be-over-a-psychologist-warns-vol-13-no-12/>; Margie

Bonnett, “One Hundred Days of Freedom: at a Final Reunion, the Hostage Families Put the Past Behind Them”, *Ibid.* (4 March 1981): <http://people.com/archive/one-hundred-days-of-freedom-at-a-final-reunion-the-hostage-families-put-the-past-behind-them-vol-15-no-17/>

<sup>78</sup> Witt, “When the Hostages Come Home”.

<sup>79</sup> “When the Hostages Came Home”, *Reader’s Digest* (April 1981), Voigts Folder: “Scrapbooks, Magazine articles (1980-1981)”, Box 2.

<sup>80</sup> John Trattner interview (20 June 2007), ADST: <https://cdn.loc.gov/service/mss/mfdip/2010/2010tra01/2010tra01.pdf>.

<sup>81</sup> Rosen, Rosen, and Feifer, *Destined Hour*, 156

<sup>82</sup> Saunders and Newsome memorandum “Iran Update, December 8, 1979” to Vance, JCL NLC-128-8-10-7-3.

<sup>83</sup> Sylvia Chan-Malik, “Chadors, Feminists, Terror: The Racial Politics of U.S. Media Representations of the 1979 Iranian Women’s Movement”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 637(2011), 112-40.

<sup>84</sup> McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 199-200.

<sup>85</sup> “An Open Letter to the Families of Americans Held Hostage in Tehran”, nd [circa 13 July 1980], Voigts Folder: “Iran Working Group, Weekly news packets, June 30-September 21, 1980”, Box 1.

<sup>86</sup> FLAG Inc., Minutes of Organizational Meeting of Board of Directors, 10 May 1980, Folder: “Family Liaison Action Group Post Hostage Crisis 1983”, Laingen Box 10.

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<sup>87</sup> FLAG Inc., Minutes of First Meeting of Members, 5 August 1980, *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> “Statement of Katherine Keough, President, FLAG, Inc”, nd [circa 1982-83], JCL Unprocessed FLAG materials.

<sup>89</sup> “Personalities”, *Washington Post* (15 May 1980).

<sup>90</sup> William Branigan, “Iranians Clash at Universities”, *Ibid.* (22 April 1980).

<sup>91</sup> Lynton, “Families of Hostages Differ”.

<sup>92</sup> State Department telegram to Ahern, 23 April 1980, Voigts Folder: “Iran Working Group, Background”, Box 1.

<sup>93</sup> Vance memorandum to Carter, 18 April 1980, JCL NLC-128-15-4-5-5; State Department cable to Diplomatic and Consular Posts, 22 April 1980, JCL NLC-16-94-4-6-0.

<sup>94</sup> Jerry Adler, “And the families still wait”, *Newsweek* (5 May 1980).

<sup>95</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update - June 1, 1980” to Muskie, Christopher, and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-2-3-1-3.

<sup>96</sup> Rosen, Rosen, and Feifer, *Destined Hour*, 238.

<sup>97</sup> “Wife of Iran Hostage Talks with British Premier, Prelate”, *Associated Press* (23 April 1980).

<sup>98</sup> “Telephone Conversation Between the Prime Minister and President Carter”, 19 April 1980, PREM [Prime Minister’s Office Archives, The National Archives, Kew] 19/276 Folder: “IRAN. Internal situation: relations with USA and UK following hostage taking at US embassy”.

<sup>99</sup> “Wife of Iran Hostage Talks with British Premier”.

<sup>100</sup> “Message from ‘FLAG’ to the People of Europe”, nd [circa April 1980] JCL Folder: “FLAG: Message to European Community”, Unprocessed FLAG materials.

<sup>101</sup> Rosen, Rosen, and Feifer, *Destined Hour*, 242-43.

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<sup>102</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – May 8, 1980” to Christopher and Newsom, JCL NLC-6-33-2-5-2.

<sup>103</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – May 13” to Muskie, Christopher, and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-2-2-8-7.

<sup>104</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – May 14” to Christopher and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-2-2-9-6.

<sup>105</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update, May 5” to Christopher and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-2-1-5.

<sup>106</sup> Rosen, Rosen, and Feifer, *Destined Hour*, 234-35.

<sup>107</sup> “National Security Council Meeting”, 11 April 1980, “National Security Council Meeting”, 15 April 1980, both JCL Folder: “Iran, 4/80”, Box 23, Plains File – Subject.

<sup>108</sup> Vance to Carter, 21 April 1980, Carter to Vance, 28 April 1980, both JCL Folder: “Hostages in U.S. Embassy in Iran, 1980, No. 1 [C/F, O/A 749] [1]”, Box 62, Powell Files.

<sup>109</sup> Document 8, “The Holloway Report”, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 August 1980, Digital National Security Archive: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB63/doc8.pdf>.

<sup>110</sup> Adam Clymer, “New Carter Stress on Hostages Likely”, *NY Times* (29 June 1980).

<sup>111</sup> Sick memorandum “Diplomatic Strategy for Iran – The Period Ahead”, with attachments to Brzezinski “SCC Meeting, May 2”, JCL NLC-132-112-12-2-5.

<sup>112</sup> Muskie memorandum to Carter, 29 July 1980, JCL NLC-128-15-7-12-3.

<sup>113</sup> Brzezinski memorandum “Hostage Wives” to Carter, 29 July 1980, JCL Folder: “Iran: 7/80-1/81”, Box 21, Brzezinski Material – Country.

<sup>114</sup> Muskie memorandum “A Strategy for the New Phase in Iran” to Carter, 1 August 1980, JCL NLC-132-61-4-4-7L.

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<sup>115</sup> FLAG, Minutes of Members Meeting, 9 August 1980, FLAG, Minutes of Board Meeting, 9 August 1980, both Laingen Folder: “Family Liaison Action Group Post Hostage Crisis 1983”, Box 10.

<sup>116</sup> Notes from “Family Meeting S.F. 8 and 9 August, 1980”, JCL Folder: “Iran Correspondence”, Box 1, Morefield Files.

<sup>117</sup> FLAG, Minutes of Board Meeting, 6-7 September 1980, Laingen Folder: “Family Liaison Action Group Post Hostage Crisis 1983”, Box 10; Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – September 8, 1980” to Muskie, Christopher, and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-2-6-6-5, JCL; Muskie memorandum to Carter, 9 September 1980, JCL NLC-128-15-9-6-6.

<sup>118</sup> FLAG to Rafsanjani, nd [circa October 1980], Laingen Folder: “Family Liaison Action Group Post Hostage Crisis 1983”, Box 10; Muskie memorandum to Carter, 9 September 1980, JCL NLC-128-15-9-6-6.

<sup>119</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – September 10, 1980” to Muskie, Christopher, and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-2-6-8-3; Muskie, “Iran’s Seizure of the United States Embassy”, House Foreign Affairs Committee (17, 19 and 25 February and 11 March 1980), 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 20.

<sup>120</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – October 18, 1980” to Muskie, Christopher, and Newsom, JCL NLC-128-2-9-2-6.

<sup>121</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – October 21, 1980” to Christopher and Newsom”, JCL NLC-128-2-9-4-4; “Wife of Hostage and Iranian Aide Met Last Week, State Dept. Says”, *Associated Press* (21 October 1980).

<sup>122</sup> Saunders memorandum “Iran Update – December 11, 1980” to Christopher and Newsom, JCL NLC-2-33-5-2-6.

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<sup>123</sup> FLAG, Minutes of Board Meeting, 13 December 1980, Laingen Folder: “Family Liaison Action Group Post Hostage Crisis 1983”, Box 10.

<sup>124</sup> Statement, Laingen and Morefield to Tower and White, nd [circa July 1980], JCL Folder: “Iran Correspondence”, Box 1, Morefield Files.

<sup>125</sup> Saunders, “Iran’s Seizure of the United States Embassy”, House Foreign Affairs Committee (17, 19, and 25 February and 11 March 1980), 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 95.

<sup>126</sup> Christopher, “The Iran Agreements”, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (17, 18 February and 4 March 1981), 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 28-91

<sup>127</sup> Special Coordinating Committee, “Iran”, 29 April 1980, JCL NLC-128-10-9-6-4.

<sup>128</sup> Bobbit memorandum “Hostage Families” to Cutler, 29 April 1980, JCL NLC-43-13-5-4-1.

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<sup>131</sup> Louisa Kennedy, “Hostage Relief Act of 1980”, House Subcommittee on International Operations (24 July, 3, 10 September 1980), 96<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 13-23.

<sup>132</sup> Elsea, “Efforts to Obtain Compensation”.

<sup>133</sup> Katherine Keough, “Benefits to Federal Employees who are Victims of Terrorism”, Joint Hearings: House Subcommittees on Civil Service, Compensation and Employee Benefits, and International Operations of the Foreign Affairs Committee (12, 24 June 1985), 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 31.

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