
Text E: CIA Plan to Overthrow Mossadegh (excerpt)

This text is an excerpt from the CIA plan (known as TPAJAX) to overthrow Mohammed Mossadegh. (Note: SIS stands for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service.) The document was still classified when it was published in The New York Times in 2000.

Initial Operational Plan for TPAJAX as Cabled from Nicosia to Headquarters on 1 June 1953 Summary of Preliminary Plan prepared by SIS and CIA Representatives in Cyprus

I. Preliminary Action

A. Interim Financing of Opposition

1. CIA will supply \$35,000 to Zahedi.
2. SIS will supply \$25,000 to Zahedi.
3. SIS indigenous channels in Iran will be used to supply above funds to Zahedi.
4. CIA will attempt to subsidize key military leaders if this is necessary.

B. Acquisition shah cooperation

1. Stage 1: Convince the shah that UK and US have joint aim and remove pathological fear of British intrigues against him.
 - a. Ambassador Henderson call on the shah to assure him of US- common aid and British supporting him not Mossadegh.
 - b. Henderson to say to the shah that special US representative will soon be introduced to him for presentation joint US-UK plan.
2. Stage 2: Special US representative will visit the shah and present following:
 - a. Presentation to the shah
 - (1) Both governments consider oil question secondary
 - (2) Major issue is to maintain independence Iran and keep from the Soviet orbit. To do this Mossadegh must be removed.
 - (3) Present dynasty best bulwark national sovereignty.
 - (4) While Mossadegh in power no aid for Iran from United States
 - (5) Mossadegh must go.
 - (6) US-UK financial aid will be forthcoming to successor government.
 - (7) Acceptable oil settlement will be offered but successor government will not be rushed into it.

b. Demands on the shah

- (1) You must take leadership in overthrow Mossadegh.
- (2) If not, you bear responsibility for collapse of country.
- (3) If not, shah's dynasty will fall and US-UK backing of you will cease.
- (4) Who do you want to head successor government? (Try and maneuver shah into naming Zahedi.)
- (5) Warning not to discuss approach.
- (6) Plan of operation with Zahedi will be discussed with you.

II. Arrangement with Zahedi

- A. After agreement with shah per above, inform Zahedi he chosen to head successor government with US-UK support.
- B. Agree on specific plan for action and timetable for action. There are two ways to put Zahedi in office.
 1. Quasi-legally, whereby the shah names Zahedi Prime Minister by royal firman [decree].
 2. Military coup. Quasi-legal method to be tried first. If successful at least part of machinery for military coup will be brought into action. If it fails, military coup will follow in matter of hours.

III. Relations with Majlis

Important for quasi-legal effort. To prepare for such effort deputies must be purchased.

- A. Basic aim is to secure 41 votes against Mossadegh and assure quorum for quasi-legal move by being able to depend on 53 deputies in Majlis. (SIS consider 20 deputies now not controlled, must be purchased.)
- B. Approach to deputies to be done by SIS indigenous agent group. CIA will backstop where necessary by pressures on Majlis deputies and will provide part of the funds.

IV. Relations with Religious Leaders

Religious leaders should:

- A. Spread word of their disapproval of Mossadegh.
- B. As required, stage political demonstrations under religious cover.
- C. Reinforce backbone of the shah.
- D. Make strong assurances over radio and in mosques after coup that new government faithful Moslem principles. Possibly as quid pro quo prominent cleric Borujerdi would be offered ministry without portfolio or consider implementing neglected article constitution providing body five mullas (religious leaders) to pass on orthodoxy of legislation.
- E. [Redacted] should be encouraged to threaten direct action against pro-Mossadegh deputies.

V. Relations with Bazaar

Bazaar contacts to be used to spread anti-government rumors and possibly close bazaar as anti-government expression.

VI. Tudeh

Zahedi must expect violent reaction from Tudeh and be prepared to meet with superior violence.

- A. Arrest at least 100 Party and Front Group leaders.
- B. Seal off South Tehran to prevent influx Tudeh demonstrations.
- C. Via black leaflets direct Tudeh members not to take any action.

VII. Press and Propaganda Program

- A. Prior coup intensify anti-Mossadegh propaganda.
- B. Zahedi should quickly appoint effective chief of government press and propaganda who will:
 1. Brief all foreign correspondents.
 2. Release advance prepared US and UK official statements.
 3. Make maximum use of Radio Tehran.

VIII. Relations with Tribes

- A. Coup will provoke no action from Bahktiari, Lurs, Kurds, Baluchi, Zolfaghair, Mamassani, Boer Amadi, and Khamseh tribal groups.
- B. Major problem is neutralization of Qashqa'i tribal leaders.

IX. Mechanics of Quasi-Legal Overthrow

- A. At this moment the view with most favor is the so-called [redacted] whereby mass demonstrators seek religious refuge in Majlis grounds. Elements available to religious leaders would be joined by those supplied by bazaar merchants, up to 4,000 supplied by SIS controlled group and additional elements supplied through CIA.
- B. Would be widely publicized that this refuge movement on basis two grounds popular dissatisfaction with Mossadegh government as follows:
 1. Ground one that Mossadegh government basically anti-religious as most clearly demonstrated ties between Mossadegh and Tudeh; and Mossadegh and USSR. Just prior to movement CIA would give widest publicity to all fabricated documents proving secret agreement between Mossadegh and Tudeh.
 2. Ground two that Mossadegh is leading the country into complete economic collapse through his unsympathetic dictatorship. Just prior to movement CIA would give widest publicity to the evidence of illegally issued paper money. CIA might have capability to print masses excellent imitation currency which would be over-printed by this message.
- C. Religious refuge to take place at the dawn of the coup day. Immediately followed by effort have Majlis pass a motion to censure the government. This is to be followed by the dismissal of Mossadegh and the appointment of Zahedi as successor, If successful, the coup would be completed by early afternoon. Failing success, the coup would be mounted later that evening.

Notes: