

## Senate Unit Hears Nixon Rejected Pentagon Advice on Iran Jet Sales

### Hearings Suggest He Might Have Bowed to Pressure From Officials at Grumman

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 27—The Pentagon, in a recommendation made shortly before President Richard M. Nixon's visit to Iran in May 1972, privately urged that Iran not be permitted to purchase either the F-14 or the F-15 fighter aircraft, a Senate subcommittee hearing was told today.

But Mr. Nixon rejected this recommendation, the subcommittee was told, and personally informed Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlavi that his nation could purchase any advanced United States weapons system that it could afford. Iran subsequently ordered 80 F-14's at a cost of \$2.2 billion.

Mr. Nixon's reason for rejecting the Pentagon's advice and permitting Iran to have access to one of America's most sophisticated weapons systems has never been made clear.

Recent hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on multinational corporations, however, have suggested that sales pressure from the Grumman Corporation, of Bethpage, L.I., the F-14 manufacturer, might have been the reason.

#### Sale Considered 'Counterproductive'

In testimony today, Jerome I. Levinson, the subcommittee staff counsel, summarized a Pentagon briefing paper that recommended against the aircraft sale in 1972 because the plane was then in its development stage.

The briefing paper, as described by Mr. Levinson, also argued that by the time the F-14 would be available for delivery to Iran its sale could be "counterproductive" to the security of the Persian Gulf and to the ultimate security of the United States—a signal that some officials in the Pentagon had doubts over the long-

range goals of the Iranian military build-up.

"What worries me," Senator Frank Church, the subcommittee chairman, told a witness, "is whether an American corporation, anxiously out to make a sale, has, in effect, made the sale for us" before the United States had decided it was in the national interest.

The witness, Martin R. Hoffmann, Secretary of the Army, told Mr. Church, "I guess I'm not as fearful as you" of overseas sales activity by American defense corporations. "If the Government has good communications between the ambassador and the military advisory assistance group, it'd be hard for a company to make a sale against United States' interests," he said.

But Mr. Hoffmann, who helped investigate the military sales program in Iran in 1973 while serving as a special assistant to the then Secretary of Defense, James R. Schlesinger, later acknowledged that the Pentagon and its military advisory assistance group in Iran had not learned until two years after the fact that the Grumman Corporation had hired sales agents to help negotiate the F-14 sale. Such use of third-party agents was said to be in direct contravention of the Shah's orders.

Mr. Hoffmann also gently criticized Grumman and the McDonnell Douglas Corporation, manufacturer of the F-15, for their extensive sales competition inside Iran.

"We don't like to go out and prematurely advertise our sophisticated products," he said. "There's a problem if the companies are not at least in touch with our people in Iran who are advising the Iranians on arms sales."

Maj. Gen. Ellis Williamson, retired, who headed the Iranian military advisory assistance group mission from 1971 until 1973, told the subcommittee that he did not know of Grumman's use of sales agents inside Iran. He also testified that he did not know that the Pentagon had formally recommended in 1972 against the sale of F-14's to Iran.

#### 'A Businessmen's Smorgasbord'

"We were not in the sales business," General Williamson said. Nonetheless, he added, he was constantly being visited by people with something to sell and described Iran in the early 1970's as "a businessmen's smorgasbord." He estimated that as many as 35 American businessmen a week visited Iran.

Throughout his tour of duty in Iran, however, General Williamson said, he had no direct contact with Grumman representatives.

Senator Church, Democrat of Idaho, has repeatedly expressed concern during the subcommittee hearings over what he has termed the lack of policy and coordination among the various Government agencies responsible for foreign arms sales.