ABSTRACT
It appeared that as 1977 dawned, the political climate in the United States might render multi-billion dollar arms sales into unstable regions a thing of the past. Jimmy Carter triumphed in the presidential election of November 1976 on a popular platform of arms control and the introduction of human rights considerations into American foreign policy. His transition from that idealistic candidate to the president who agreed to sell Iran a fleet of highly advanced AWACS aircraft, as part of a record breaking $5.7 billion arms package, is therefore outwardly confusing. Yet, when examining the entrenched policy path that Carter inherited regarding arming Iran, and the larger needs of Cold War containment, the logic of Carter’s decisions essentially to betray his own policies in this case becomes clear.

Jimmy Carter’s experiences with Iran during his one term in office between 1977 and 1981 form a major component of his Administration’s legacy. It proved an eventful period in which the Administration was criticised for slow and indecisive reactions to the Shah’s domestic decline in 1978 and the Islamic revolution that followed in 1979. When adding the Iran hostage crisis and the debate over systematic failures of American intelligence regarding the loss of Iran, these standout issues have absorbed the bulk of analysis on Carter and Iran.1 Yet, an episode that remains under-explored is the implications of Carter’s decision to sell Iran a fleet of highly advanced Airborne Warning and Control System [AWACS] aircraft in 1977 as part of a $5.7 billion arms package including 160 F-16 fighter jets.

It seems surprising that the Shah, an autocrat who was supressing political opposition in Iran, was able to win support from the Carter Administration for a major arms sale. It appeared that as 1977 dawned, the politics of a new president and the gathering momentum of a resurgent Congress, keen to introduce moderation in arms sales that had destabilised the Middle East, might make multi-billion dollar arms sales into unstable regions a thing of the past. After all, Carter triumphed in the presidential election of November 1976 partially on a popular platform of arms control and the
introduction of human rights considerations into American foreign policy. His transition from that idealistic candidate to the president who agreed a record breaking—and highly contentious—arms deal with the Shah is, therefore, outwardly confusing. Yet, when examining the entrenched policy path that Carter inherited regarding arming Iran and the larger needs of Cold War containment, the logic of Carter’s decisions essentially to betray his own campaigning policies becomes clear.

In assessing Carter’s approach to Iran, it is therefore no surprise that despite overall expectations that he would reduce arms sales, little doubt exists that Iran would be an exception to the rule and a signal that his grander ambitions for arms limitation would be doomed. Iran represented a vitally important strategic asset for the United States in the Persian Gulf region, and continual bolstering of its military capabilities only further entrenched the area as an American stronghold during the bipolar rivalry with the Soviet Union. With Saudi Arabia lingering in military backwardness and political instability, and Israel engaged in a bitter series of conflicts with its Arab neighbours—Iran was the most reliable and able American security partner in the region. Consequently, Carter’s Iran policy came to reflect the more strategically minded policy path inherited from his Republican predecessors. While the extant literature concurs that the constraints of the Cold War gradually forced Carter to abandon his ideals, no account fully investigates the AWACS sale to Iran. Occurring only a few months into his tenure, the decision to sell these advanced airplanes to Iran was an early, if not the earliest, indication that Carter’s idealism was on a collision course with Cold War reality. The episode also yields a new insight into Carter’s personal disposition as his designs for a new turn in American foreign policy became unmoored during his first year in office.

Iran had become America’s largest arms customer long before Carter became president. Due to Iran’s geographical location, it quickly became a focal point in American containment policy in the 1940s, acting as a bulwark to restrict Soviet access to Persian Gulf oil reserves that accounted for more than 60 percent of world supply. Iran’s political, social, and economic instability saw a series of United States military and economic aid programmes established with Tehran during the first two decades of the Cold War. In addition, an Anglo–American coup staged in 1953 removed a revisionist left-leaning coalition and ensured that Iran remained governed in a way favourable to the western Powers, with the Shah at the centre of affairs. A series of arms sales in the mid-1960s enhanced American support for the Shah’s regime as he began to use his growing oil income to look beyond the more restrictive military aid programmes gifted in the past. While a path for American arms flowing into Iran was already in place by the end of the 1960s, the significant developments that later affected the Carter Administration were set in motion by President Richard Nixon in
May 1972. Meeting with the Shah in Tehran, Nixon agreed to unlimited and unmoderated arms sales with Iran—with the exception of nuclear weapons technology—in return for the understanding that Iran would use its newfound might to protect the Gulf by proxy. This gesture, the so-called “blank check,” effected a sharp turn in American arms sales policy, liberating the Shah from administrative oversights in place for decades in Washington for foreign arms purchasers: Tehran was free to buy whatever advanced American weaponry it chose, as long as the Shah could pay for it. It was a unique arrangement for a foreign leader and a test case for Nixon’s re-imagining of American Cold War strategy based in part on outsourcing the costs of containing communism to able allies and clients—the ostensible Nixon doctrine. In addition, the Administration bypassed the moderating effect of Congress in a shrewd, and covert, executive manoeuvre of Nixon’s imperial style of leadership that left Congress in the dark for several years on the finer details of arming Iran. Yet, Nixon’s exclusion of Congress would eventually haunt Carter. A major facet of the AWACS sale in 1977 revolved around Congress viewing it as a tipping point to restore its influence over arms sales in a period when executive control had withered from the heights of the early 1970s.

Nixon designed the “blank check” policy partly as a response to the British announcement in 1968 that they would withdraw militarily from their former colonial territories in the Gulf. Upgrading Iran to fill the vacuum left by the British would sidestep the political and military complications of the direct application of American forces in another region in the wake of Vietnam. By allowing the Shah to fulfil his long-held ambitions to build a peerless regional military, Washington could still achieve its aims of containment in the Gulf and do so at little to no cost by employing Iran as a regional policeman. It was a major change in arms sales and containment policies and in the broad context of Iranian–American relations. The extent of the floodgates opened by Nixon catapulted Iranian arms purchases from approximately $150 million dollars per annum in 1969 to multi-billions per annum from 1972 onwards.

Gerald Ford, Nixon’s successor, gave full support to the established Iran-arms regime during his two and a half years in office—August 1974 to January 1977. It left Carter with no alternative short of a wholesale regional policy rethink—for which there was negligible appetite in Washington. This reluctance became evident when a study of Soviet–American global competition led by Carter’s National Security Council [NSC] in summer 1977 concluded that Iran was the area where a “crisis confrontation” with the Soviets would most likely occur. The study recommended the creation of an American Rapid Deployment Force, permanently stationed in the Gulf, to ensure that the Iranian domino would not fall. Carter agreed and signed the study into policy via Presidential Directive [PD] 18 in August 1977. The
Department of Defence housed in the Pentagon effectively ignored the directive and failed to create the Force due to a lack of both resources and will.\textsuperscript{10} The State Department was similarly unmotivated, continuing to rely on the received wisdom of Nixon’s regional policy in which arms sales to Iran were to prevent the need for the local deployment of American military power.\textsuperscript{11} So, while it is fair to say that ideas existed that went beyond Nixon’s Gulf strategy to arm Iran as a proxy force, the fact that Carter did not see PD-18 operable during 1977–1978 indicated the extent to which prior thinking had hardened into place.

In a more general sense, much criticism exists about the nature of Carter’s foreign policy behaviour and those policies’ failure in terms of achieving objectives the president valued such as human rights and arms reductions. However, Carter’s foreign policy found heavy basis on the assumptions of his predecessors whether intentional or not. The AWACS sale to Iran is only one example of a foreign policy developed on assumptions of American self-interest and containment, rather than the rhetorical values espoused by Carter during his presidency. The Carter era of foreign policy was supposed to be different, or at least that was what Carter wanted to believe. What became evident, however, was the difficulty of promoting an international policy package constrained by the Cold War but mirroring the president’s liberal beliefs.

The arms trade was a particularly sensitive issue during the Carter era, and the Administration’s approach to arms, and its juxtaposition to other normative issues, are a key aspect of Carter’s policy failure. For John Lewis Gaddis, “The difficulty here was that Carter never related his moral and domestic political commitment to human rights to his geopolitical and (given the alternative) humane commitment to arms control.”\textsuperscript{12} As such, Carter’s policy towards Iran during the final phase of the Shah’s rule has been referred to as his “most glaring and costly [foreign policy] inconsistency.”\textsuperscript{13} This is best encapsulated in the New Year’s Eve tribute that Carter delivered in 1977 in Tehran in which he toasted the Shah for turning Iran into an “island of stability.”\textsuperscript{14} It was a fateful moment for Carter as one year later the Shah had to flee his own country and the once conservative Iran transformed into a revisionist—and regionally destabilising—force. What is most interesting about the wider context of the AWACS case is that it demonstrated that arms sales did not see actual restraint in any large-scale manner during Carter’s tenure. In the case of Iran, due in part to the AWACS, arms sales actually increased to record levels. Even as the Shah entered his twilight in summer 1978, another multi-billion dollar Iranian–American arms deal appeared; the Cold War once again intensified, creating a need for increased American defence spending. In addition, a major facet of Carter’s 1978 Camp David accords between Egypt and Israel involved a multi-billion dollar package of arms sales to both nations—as well as to Saudi Arabia—which
Carter advanced to make each party feel more secure and thereby more inclined to sign on to his peace plans. In short, despite rumours to the contrary, Carter was not shy of selling arms.

It did not take long for Iran arms issues to enter the agenda of the new Carter Administration in 1977. Just five days after the presidential inauguration, the Iranian ambassador at Washington, Ardeshir Zahedi, visited Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s national security advisor, at the White House. Reminding Brzezinski that a “new phase of relations” had been established based on the significant military purchases that Iran had made since 1972, Zahedi also referred to unspecified agreements made with the Ford Administration to raise Iran’s military and civilian purchases by anywhere from $15 and $50 billion over the coming years. Zahedi’s vagueness about exact figures captured neatly just how Iran’s business with the United States was becoming ever deeper, yet ever more difficult. The bulk of Zahedi’s upper $50 billion figure was for a nuclear energy deal the terms of which the Ford Administration and the Shah had failed to agree—Carter would in fact close such a deal the following year. The accounting also factored in an elusive oil-for-arms barter agreement that the Shah had been pursuing for over a decade. Hence, both unconsummated proposals contributed to the speculative upper total. The $15 billion lower end of Zahedi’s estimate comprised pending arms sales such as the AWACS, multiple fleets of F-16 fighters, and lower order military equipment, spare parts, and ammunition. With this significant level of business pending, Zahedi candidly asked if there were any issues on which disagreement could be expected between Iran and the new Administration. Brzezinski replied only in general terms, noting that the complexity of Iranian–American relations might expect disagreement and a full discussion on arms sales with Iran would be forthcoming.  

Pressure did not just emanate from the Iranian side; there had been an anti-arms sentiment building through the 1970s on Capitol Hill. To gauge this situation for himself, Carter summoned a cross-section of Congressional leaders to the White House on 1 February. The delegation welcomed Carter’s general ideas on arms reduction but quickly focussed on specific cases. In a thinly veiled reference to Iran, Senator Frank Church noted that arms sales to Middle Eastern Powers had run out of proportion to the domestic needs of those countries. More directly, Representative Lee Hamilton announced his intention to work towards the “deny and delay” of arms sales to Israel and Iran. Cyrus Vance, Carter’s secretary of state, noted in response to both Hamilton and Church that “we will sink the peninsula if we keep selling arms.” Whilst the Congressional positions were consistent with past behaviour, Vance’s concurrence was a strong signal to the delegation that the Administration intended to be true to the arms control promises made on the campaign trail. Carter’s choice to remain silent as Vance spoke was likely
due to a realisation that arms control rhetoric was easier to voice when he was merely campaigning for president.

On 7 February 1977, Carter made his first official contact with the Shah, exchanging via letter the usual diplomatic pleasantries and expressing his wish to maintain what he referred to as a “firm relationship” with Iran. Beyond that reassurance, Carter noted that there were serious challenges ahead. Despite the large order of business on the table, there was no direct mention of arms. This was a deliberate attempt by Carter to reshape the contours of diplomacy with Iran. What Carter did mention directly was that:

In the long run, peace and economic progress are indivisible, and there are no nobler tasks for us to work toward together. At times our approaches to these problems may naturally differ, but these will be differences between close and reliable friends, approached in an atmosphere of shared understanding.\textsuperscript{18}

The Shah had Iranian state television praise the letter, leading to confusion within the Carter Administration that had been expecting a more subdued reaction. Brzezinski was convinced that the Shah “disliked the letter” and had merely acted otherwise to maintain a domestic \textit{façade} that it was business as usual in the Iranian–American relationship.\textsuperscript{19} As the discussion continued over the following days, the general impression converged with Brzezinski’s view that the Shah’s reaction was likely a domestic public relations stunt and private discontent would doubtless be forthcoming. Encapsulating this line of thinking, Gary Sick, who led Iranian policy at the NSC, told Brzezinski, “That is the price we must expect to pay if we intend to pursue an independent policy on such issues as oil prices and arms transfers which may not always be what the Shah would like to hear from us.”\textsuperscript{20}

Whilst Carter’s missive by no means indicated that his Administration would reject all arms sales to Iran, it was a clear signal of a change in the order of business. Considering the general philosophy over arms within the new Administration—and the mood on Capitol Hill—the Shah had good reason to be worried. Taken together with the aforementioned statements made by Vance, Brzezinski, and Sick, Carter’s letter was the deathblow to Nixon’s “blank check.” However, it did not necessarily mean that arms sales to Iran would end.

As tentative diplomatic contacts were beginning between the Shah and the new Administration, Carter set into motion Presidential Review Memorandum [PRM] 12 into general United States arms transfer policy; Vance chaired the Review.\textsuperscript{21} As various studies progressed, despite his earlier statements in support of arms restraint, Vance became an unlikely motor within the Administration favouring a permissive arms sales regime with Iran. He received regular alarmist telegrams reporting on the Shah’s mind-set from the Embassy in Tehran and, as a result, grew impatient. He petitioned Carter to bypass the review process and expedite the bulk of the multi-billion
dollar pending arms sales to prevent production bottlenecks and serious “political problems” in bilateral relations with Iran. Rejecting this course, Carter noted that he would assess each case individually and the review process should run its course. In hindsight, Vance’s plea would be the first detectable moment from within the Administration that regional strategic concerns would sometimes need to trump the arms limitation idealism of the new Administration. At this point, however, Carter remained wedded to his principles.

Vance delivered the results of PRM-12 in early April, after which Brzezinski’s NSC team added its own reflections and consulted with both the House International Relations Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The process was open and inclusive—reflecting Carter’s intention to run foreign policy with a team approach. Carter personally reviewed the various positions and delivered his chosen course of action with PD-13 one month later. It set the tone for arms sales throughout the entire Carter Administration and put into policy the philosophy that Carter had brought with him to the White House. It established a policy of restraint in the sale of conventional arms to allied nations:

Arms transfers are an exceptional foreign policy implement, to be used only in instances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the transfers contribute to our national security interests.

Not just a statement of Carter’s intention to deliver on his electioneering promise of arms restraint, PD-13 also outlined that economic impact assessments would occur for less developed recipients of arms agreements. It restored the logic of arms sales that had been evident from the Truman Administration through to the Johnson Administration. Nixon overturned that logic in 1972 when he determined that the only conditions touching the Shah were whether he could make his credit payments and forbidding nuclear weaponry.

Aside from the broader statements of intent, PD-13 set out several specific conditions—each of which had direct implications for future Iranian–American arms sales. First, prohibiting the introduction of any technology not yet fully integrated and operational within the American military apparatus. Second, committing the United States not to be the first Power to introduce a qualitatively advanced new weapons system into a region. When considering the nature of Iran’s arms build-up thus far, this condition was sure to cause problems for the Shah. Third, directing that advance sales did not require the deployment of American contractors—highly noteworthy when considering that Iran was deeply dependent on a large, and ever increasing, number of American technicians and engineers. The final point of note introduced a limit on arms sales: the 1977 federal fiscal year arms
sales figure would serve as a ceiling, with each successive year thereafter reducing on the prior year’s total.

Capitol Hill’s reaction to PD-13 proved mixed at best. It would take time and a series of tests for Congress to establish its position. Yet a general concern existed that the numerous exceptions and conditions would result in a more permissive level of sales than the Congress was happy to see.²⁶ Concern of a different nature came from within the staffer levels of the departments of State and Defense. Concern there arose that security relationships with key allies would be affected negatively by what appeared to be an arbitrarily restrictionist policy, reflecting on Vance’s warning.²⁷ To those experienced staffers, PD-13 seemed to indicate that valued foreign allies such as Iran would be humiliated by pleading on a case-by-case basis for their basic security needs. This situation occurred with Iran some months later when the Shah made his official request to buy the AWACS.

Officially titled the E-3 Sentry, the AWACS were highly modified and militarised Boeing 707 jets fitted with a large revolving radar dome that served as high altitude airborne command centres. Although outwardly defensive and carrying no weapons, the system provided a force multiplier effect that enhanced the user’s offensive capabilities. The ambiguity with the AWACS was because it explicitly allowed for the monitoring and location of enemy ground and airborne stationing and battlefield movements. Yet, implicitly—and simultaneously—it enabled the offensive co-ordination of the user’s forces. For example, Iran could use the system to direct its fighter jets to attack a target beyond Iranian borders. Put simply, the AWACS was a high-tech eye in the sky, able to cover thousands of square miles per flight. Although there were pre-existing primitive cousins of this system in both Soviet and American hands, the AWACS was the most advanced early warning system available at the time, a generation ahead of competitor systems and still in service today.

Iran had expressed interest in purchasing a fleet of AWACS as early as 1974 when the prototypes were being developed as part of a $1.5 billion United States Air Force [USAF] programme. Under Nixon’s arms regime, the Shah had been able to access prototype systems, and regularly attended military demonstrations. A consensus existed during the Ford years that due to Iran’s proximity to the Soviet Union and its large landmass, the Shah had a good case to make for the purchase of an airborne radar system rather than the more conventional ground-based systems. Under Ford, the Shah’s initial estimates of needing seven AWACS to patrol his airspace had increased to between nine and ten due to joint American and Iranian assessments.²⁸ Still, production delays in the AWACS development cycle prevented concluding any final deal with Iran during the Ford years.

Although American arms sales were on hold in the first half of 1977 awaiting the arrival of PD-13, Carter decided to go ahead with the sale of
five AWACS to Iran in mid-April. Carter reached this decision despite internal opposition from the Central Intelligence director, Stansfield Turner. Turner opposed the sale due to fears of the Soviet Union gaining access to the sensitive technology on-board the craft through either espionage or capture.29 The tide flowing in the opposite direction came chiefly from the USAF, which hoped that the additional AWACS sales would lower production costs and enable some of the significant research and development costs to be recouped.30 Additionally, there was diplomatic pressure on Carter as both Nixon and Ford had given informal assurances to the Shah that he would acquire the AWACS.31

The decision to sell Iran only five AWACS was notable on several levels. First, it was one-half of the Shah’s request. This result immediately presented effectiveness issues with the fleet possibly not being able to cover Iran’s airspace, thereby making the system unfit for purpose. This gesture was typical of Carter’s approach to problems—attempt to engineer a compromise that would suit both sides. It was also an effort to avoid appearances that he was being hypocritical in brokering such a significant arms deal despite his campaign rhetoric. Selling less of the craft would allow Carter to show Congress and the public that he was serious about arms control, while also remaining faithful to America’s allies. Second, a point unknown to the Shah,32 the sale was to go ahead only after extensive sanitising of some of the highly sensitive equipment on each craft, rendering the Iranian AWACS materially different from the USAF models. Again, it constituted a compromise to deflect fears of the sensitive technology falling onto Soviet hands. To Carter, this sale seemed like an acceptable compromise. Compromise, then, is the important issue to hold on to at this point. Very early in his tenure, it is clear that Carter was less absolute than he appeared some months earlier on the campaign trail—and those wishing to detect a crack in Carter’s arms control aspirations might consider this the first one of significance.

When notified of the AWACS offer in mid-April, the Shah saw the development as the beginning of a barter process and immediately pleaded for nine craft. Writing to Carter on 27 April, the Shah seized upon the unfit for purpose argument—that five craft would not be sufficient coverage for Iranian defence purposes. This was a strong bargaining position considering the prior Iranian–American study on how many AWACS Iran would need.33 Carter found himself manoeuvred into a corner, but he was not yet ready to countenance a concession with the Shah. Vance was expecting to deliver some kind of resolution to the AWACS impasse during a visit to Tehran in mid-May. Yet, as his briefing notes were being prepared, no consensus was forming over whether a concession of some kind was necessary. In preparation for the trip, Alfred L. Atherton, Jr. of the State Department’s Near Eastern Affairs Division advised Vance to expect the Shah once again to request nine AWACS—and if so to deflect the issue.34
indecisiveness within the Administration forced Vance to seek final clarification on the eve of his visit on the status of the deal. This clarification did not come, forcing him to leave with no compromise authorised beyond the initial offer for five AWACS.\textsuperscript{35}

Despite the uncertainty over the AWACS offer, Vance was able to secure a commitment that the Shah’s request for 160 F-16 fighter jets, advanced in September 1976, would be approved. The addition of these F-16s, when added to the 80 F-14s that the Shah had purchased earlier in the decade, gave Iran on paper one of the most sophisticated air forces in the world. Hence, Vance’s visit would at the very least deliver some good news to the military-minded Shah. Vance also received briefings to demur on the Shah’s intentions to purchase a further 140 F-16s.\textsuperscript{36} Again, Carter’s overriding persuasion was one of compromise and an attempt to portray balance. As the first F-16 deal predated the Carter Administration, and was rubber-stamped by Ford,\textsuperscript{37} there was less of a political minefield in allowing it to progress. However, by halting a second tranche of F-16s, Carter could appear to be drawing a line under the permissive arms sale regime that had characterised the Nixon/Ford years.

Whilst the Carter Administration had begun to institutionalise a framework of moderation and reflection on arms sales during 1977, the Shah stood firmly outside this orbit and continued doggedly to pursue his objectives. When Vance reported to Carter following his visit to Tehran, Carter decided to offer the Shah seven AWACS as a further compromise—essentially meeting the Shah halfway.\textsuperscript{38} There seemed no indication that the Shah wished to push further when notified of this compromise, and he appeared content with seven AWACS.\textsuperscript{39} Additionally, Carter invited the Shah to Washington in November to put their relationship on a personal level. As with countless occasions in the past, the Shah gratefully accepted this opportunity. Underscoring the longevity of the Shah’s reign, Carter would be the eighth American president who he would meet whilst on the Peacock throne.

Due to Nixon’s imperial-styled control over arms sales, with Iran forming a stand-out case, Congress had appropriated the authority via the 1974 Nelson-Bingham amendment to independency scrutinise all major arms sales. Such bureaucratic issues were irritating for the Shah, who had become accustomed to the unmoderated access of the Nixon arms regime. The 1974 Nelson-Bingham amendment stipulated that arms sales over $25 million and equipment sales over $7 million were to be submitted to Congress—upon which event it would have thirty days to approve or reject the sale.\textsuperscript{40} If both Houses of Congress concurrently opposed a sale by majority vote, it would become void; if one House approved, a sale would proceed.

In March 1976, Congress had exercised its new statutory powers to hold up a comparatively minor sale of C-130 transport aircraft to Egypt. It raised alarm that Iran may be next in the Congressional firing line.\textsuperscript{41} By summer
1976, it had become apparent to Henry Kissinger, Ford’s secretary of state and key advocate for the Iran-arms sale regime, that there was a clear “anti-arms-sales binge on the Hill.” Congressional concern over arms sales mounting through the 1970s did not solely drive this sentiment; so, too, did a tide of media scrutiny over the Shah’s intentions. Inaccurate reporting in the American press sparked public alarm over a new $10 billion arms agreement with Iran as part of a larger $50 billion commercial deal. The $10 billion figure actually largely comprised credit repayments, due over the coming five years. Hence, it was for deals already done, such as Iran’s purchase of 80 F-14 jets during the Nixon years. The remaining $40 billion was largely accountable to the as-yet unsigned and contentious nuclear energy deal and various other formative arms deals and infrastructure projects. The episode chimed with a growing unease towards the Shah and his relations with America, principally via his rapidly growing military and economic power. As the ringleader of the OPEC oil shocks of 1973–1974 that quadrupled the price of oil, the Shah had become a divisive figure popularly and politically. When added to an emergent tide of well-publicised activism amongst thousands of Iranian students on American college campuses over the Shah’s human rights record, Congressional attitudes over Iran were very much in flux and embodied a general moment of reflection in the United States over its relations with the Shah. The nature of the situation in America sent the Shah into a fit of paranoia that certain interests, including Israel, were lobbying against Iran in Washington and leaking false information to damage his reputation.

The background to these debates reflected a time of high tension over arms sales between Congress and the Ford Administration that became a new norm replacing the trend of executive dominance seen in the Nixon years. Two underlying problems stirred Congressional frustrations, something exemplified by what Senator Hubert H. Humphrey described as a culture of treating arms sales “as if we were selling televisions and refrigerators and washing machines.” First, Congress clearly desired a fuller consultation role in examining arms deals before they were agreed and simply rubberstamped under the Nelson-Bingham system. Senator Clifford P. Case addressed this problem acutely, using Iran as an example:

We are not really going to be able to review something if the Shah of Iran has already been told he is going to get it 3 or 4 years ago and if he has made all his own plans and staked his prestige in part on the promise that he is going to get it. Our relations with Iran are going to suffer if we exercise effectively what the public expects us to exercise; namely, a normal oversight function.

Second, a thinly veiled Nixon/Ford Administration strategy to neuter effective Congressional oversight on arms had led to abuse of the process. It occurred in the form of not only serially withholding requests for classified
executive documents on various arms agreements—such as Nixon’s “blank check”—but also via the dumping of multiple arms sales all at once giving Congress little time to scrutinise them properly. Hence, as the Carter Administration entered office, there was a clear trend of increasing oversight, and increasing frustration, on Capitol Hill over arms sales to Iran.

Inevitably, the Senate took a close interest in the AWACS sale to Iran and conducted a series of hearings in July 1977. Considering that Congressional scrutiny of the AWACS programme had been longstanding due to spiralling costs and development problems, the Senate well understood the challenges it would pose to an Iranian team of operators. Democratic senators Thomas F. Eagleton and John C. Culver voiced the primary concerns during an 18 July hearing of the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance. Eagleton stressed that the sale would result in an unacceptable increase in American technicians in Iran, deployed to assist and train Iranian AWACS operators. Further, it raised the inevitability that if Iran’s forces went into combat, those technicians would be on-board Iran’s AWACS fleet, putting American lives in jeopardy assisting in a foreign war.\textsuperscript{49} Culver, who had extensive knowledge of the AWACS and had flown on prototype demonstrations, elaborated further noting that it took over one year to train “the most menial” position within a 17 member AWACS crew. Yet, Iran was so backward in basic modern skillsets within its domestic population that it had regularly to look to Korea and the Philippines to find truck drivers to keep its industry moving.\textsuperscript{50} Culver’s testimony solidified the gradual feeling evolving within the Senate that the AWACS deal was the point at which the entrenched mind-set toward arming Iran would have to end. In Culver’s words: “We are trying to reverse a very dangerous policy of 5 years ago, which has got a momentum and a life of its own, but we have got to draw the line.”\textsuperscript{51} As previously noted, Carter’s broad arms persuasion concurred with the tide in Congress to arrest Nixon’s arms regime with Iran. Yet, this would only be a shallow point of agreement, which the AWACS sale would test.

The White House mood following the Senate hearings was sombre. Brzezinski received briefings by his staffers that this was “the strongest challenge of an intended arms sale to date,” and if a vote came there and then, the result would have been foreboding for the Administration.\textsuperscript{52} In the days following the hearing, Carter began to receive pleas from otherwise sympathetic senators to withdraw the sale. The accusation was that consideration of the sale came prematurely—due to pressure from the Shah—and at a time when a backlogged Senate faced other legislative issues. Robert C. Byrd, the Democratic Senate majority leader, wrote to Carter re-stating the concerns of Culver and Eagleton and conveyed the “considerable controversy” that the issue had generated on Capitol Hill. He added that North American Treaty Organisation [NATO] partners had not yet had notice of when they would be receiving the AWACS—making the decision to
prioritise an Iranian sale indefensible to Congress. Carter discussed the issue with Brzezinski before deciding not to withdraw the sale.

The Sub-committee on Foreign Assistance held its second AWACS meeting on 22 July. This time the hearings featured testimony from the State and Defense departments. Both Vance and Carter’s secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, left the task to lower order staff: Alfred L. Atherton Jr., the assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, represented the State department; Erich Von Marbod, the acting director of the Defense Security Agency, represented Defense. Both Atherton and Marbod repeated the Administration line and sought to offer assurances. However, events outside their control overshadowed these efforts. During late May, a bipartisan delegation of senators—Culver, Eagleton, William Proxmire, Charles Mathias, and Gaylord Nelson—had approached Turner; they drafted a letter requesting classified information on the AWACS sale. Turner took the liberty of despatching a frank response on 8 July, answering each of the senators’ questions in detail and listing his exact security concerns about selling the AWACS to Iran. After receiving the letter, Humphrey’s sub-committee called Turner to a secret session on the morning of 22 July, before the public hearings, where he testified that no matter how sanitised the AWACS technology, it would still be an unacceptable risk to place the AWACS in Iran. This exchange created an entirely new headache for Carter. Turner had given the Congress powerful ammunition in their case to reject the sale, and he had exposed a deep division within the Administration.

Despite the ever-lengthening odds, Carter was not ready to give in. Vance and Brown were despatched to reassure Congress that Iran would receive no AWACS without fully developed security measures in place. This would be the high-level push that the previous testimony by Atherton and von Marbod had lacked. The “big pitch” over the AWACS sale, personified by the Vance-Brown offensive, was in the end heavily slanted on the issue of technological sensitivity raised by Turner. It was therefore doomed to failure. Although causing high-level alarm in the Senate, Turner’s testimony was merely the straw that broke the camel’s back. This short-sighted response treated Congressional opposition as a technical issue that could be solved by compromise, rather than fully anticipating the deep alarm that the aggregation of years of multi-billion dollar arms deals with Iran had generated within Congress. These points were clearly visible in the 18 July testimony and in Byrd’s letter to Carter. The inevitable failure materialised to the extent that word reached Brzezinski days later that Vance and Brown’s efforts actually had the result of strengthening opposition to the sale.

Carter received a letter on 27 July from Humphrey confirming that the Sub-committee on Foreign Assistance had submitted a proposal to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to block the AWACS sale unless immediately
withdrawn for further study.\textsuperscript{61} The same day the House Committee on Foreign Relations secured a majority decision for a concurrent resolution of disapproval for the sale. Even the three Democratic Party senators within the Foreign Assistance Sub-committee—Church, Richard Clark, and Joe Biden—remained opposed to the sale following Turner’s testimony and were unreceptive to Carter’s advances.\textsuperscript{62} With no other option, and with his own party members against him, Carter withdrew the AWACS sale on 28 July before it was voted down.

With the efforts by Vance and Brown a failure, both Houses of Congress giving concurrent notice of stalling the sale, and his own director of Central Intelligence in open revolt against him, Carter still refused to admit defeat. He maintained an unbroken focus on securing the support necessary to make a swift re-submission successful. As he withdrew the sale, he wrote personally to Humphrey addressing all the major points of concern. Carter reminded Humphrey of the “pledge” the United States had made to Iran concerning its defences, and the AWACS in particular, before restating that the AWACS was a primarily defensive system. To allay the fears of Turner, Carter gave assurances that further sanitisation of the technology would occur prior to the sale and that all training of Iranian crews would take place in America to avoid any risk of engaging American personnel in Iranian combat missions.\textsuperscript{63} Concurrently, the president rallied sympathetic congressmen in a letter writing campaign.\textsuperscript{64}

Upon hearing the news of the temporary withdrawal of the sale, the Shah entered the fray. On 31 July, Vance cabled the American Embassy in Tehran stressing that the withdrawal of the AWACS sale was “purely and simply” the result of the Senate not having time to deliberate, and there was no Congressional hostility toward the sale.\textsuperscript{65} The Shah, who had his own insights into business at Washington, saw through Vance’s erroneous reassurance. The new American ambassador at Iran, William Sullivan, reported on 1 August that the Shah had angrily ordered the AWACS sale to be withdrawn entirely. He then opened up enquiries with Britain for comparatively lower order Nimrod radar aircraft and summoned representatives of the British Ministry of Defence to Tehran.\textsuperscript{66} Sullivan attempted to convince the Shah that although the Congressional opposition was a setback, the sale retained full presidential support. Yet, the Shah appeared at “a turning point” and questioned the entire Iranian–American relationship.\textsuperscript{67} The very same day reports began to circulate that the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, received an invitation to Tehran.\textsuperscript{68} Together with the Nimrod issue, and taking stock of the Shah’s habitual behaviour demonstrated through prior instances when he received resistance over arms sales in Washington, this was certainly a move of high stakes brinkmanship. Jack Miklos, who had left the State Department’s Iran Desk in 1974 to become
deputy chief of Mission in the Embassy at Tehran, had briefed Carter of this eventuality at several points through the first half of 1977. At one point, he cautioned that “decision to cut back supply in Iran would be interpreted as a lowering of US interest in and friendship for Iran, with the attendant consequences.”69 Those consequences were not just that Iran would seek high-level arms from European nations like Britain and France, thereby losing business for American contractors; America would lose vital political influence over Iran, as the Shah would look to the Soviets for high-level military equipment. Long keeping his military purchases with Moscow to items that were more rudimentary, it was something that he had resisted thus far. Recalling Carter’s determined efforts through July on the AWACS issue, it was likely this particular round of brinkmanship was aimed at Congress.

As the Administration took stock of the AWACS setback, a reinvigorated strategy took shape to push through the sale. During the second half of August, the Administration began a high-level push to brainstorm additional measures to convince Congress of the need for the sale. Yet, the sticking point remained Turner’s testimony. With Congress looking to draw a line under arms sales and seizing upon AWACS as a case in point, Turner had given Congress more firepower than it was accustomed to having. When compared to the carefully controlled and hierarchical foreign policy apparatus of the Nixon/Ford years, Congress had a new weapon—a divided Administration. The mood within the NSC was that if the resubmitted AWACS sale faced defeat for a second time in September, the Shah would cancel his November visit and throw America’s entire policy towards the Persian Gulf into crisis.70 The latter half of 1977 also witnessed growing reports of Iranian domestic disturbances, attacks against foreigners, and widespread opposition to the Shah’s rule. With these issues in mind, there was an additional fear that the public breakdown in the AWACS sale was adding fuel to instability within Iran by making the Shah look weak.71

Turner’s position and his testimony to Congress had also ensured that more modifications of the AWACS technology became a de facto norm within any revised sale. Yet, amazingly, consultations with the Shah over the exact nature of the downgrades never occurred. Nor was he aware that this issue had become a deal breaker. Hence, as Carter prepared to resubmit the sale to Congress, staffers within the NSC, notably Bill Cable and Frank Moore at the Congressional Liaison Office, began to ask whether the Shah would even accept such a sanitised version of the AWACS. This was a problem since much of the technology he was originally attracted to—and for which he was paying—would end up removed.72 This on-going muddle was nothing new, something predicted by an NSC staffer in a memorandum to Brzezinski two months earlier:
I have a horrible fantasy of going through a terrible fight on the Hill, winning it at the expense of the President’s personal intervention (or something comparable), extending the letter of offer with the technical details to Iran, and then being told by the Shah that this isn’t at all what he had in mind. The administration’s credibility in that case would be severely damaged, to say the least.73

With all this uncertainty in mind, Carter ordered Brzezinski to call “every member” of the House International Relations Committee to make the renewed case for the sale—the belief existed that there was generally more sympathy in the House than in the Senate.74 There also remained an additional issue: timing. If not passed by the end of September, the sale would fall within the following federal fiscal year, 1978. With Carter politically committed to lowering total arms sales under a progressively falling ceiling each federal year, getting the AWACS sale into the 1977 framework took on added political importance. If closed before 30 September, the sale would inflate the 1977 arms total by approximately ten percent, having a positive knock-on effect of raising the 1978 ceiling—each ceiling was related to the preceding years arms sales—and thereby introduce more flexibility for the following year. If the sale fell after the cut-off date, the reverse would be true. Hence, it constituted much more than a banal accountancy issue. With all eyes on resubmission by the first week of September, Carter would potentially need a favour from Congress to make their decision before the full 30-day period expired on 6 October. With all matters considered, this was a testing moment for him.

The resubmitted sale reached to Congress on 7 September. Despite Carter’s wish for an accelerated timetable, the Senate Sub-committee on Foreign Assistance was unhurried and did not reconvene for hearings until 12 days later. The Administration had prepared a robust six-point compromise delivered by Brown that answered to the best extent possible the concerns raised in July.75 The new sale package also contained a personal assurance from the Shah that Iran’s AWACS would only have defensive use. This was an example of the Administration throwing every card in the deck at Congress. Adding a promise of defensive AWACS use only was both spurious and operationally impossible. Whilst the Shah’s reassurances were unlikely to sway Congress, Turner had fallen into line under the weight of the full-scale Administration push for the AWACS sale. He did not retract the substance of his concerns, nor did he proactively back the sale. He simply removed his strong objections and replaced them with a guarded statement that advised Congress that Iran’s security record was strong enough to award it the benefit of his doubt. In sum, when added to the further modifications concerning the sensitive technology on board, this would render the AWACS relatively safe in Iranian hands.76

The coming together of these factors, when added to the significant lobbying effort conducted throughout August, secured a tight vote for the
sale in the more sympathetic House Committee on Foreign Relations.\textsuperscript{77}

Hence, with one branch of Congress affirming the sale, the ever-critical Senate Sub-committee on Foreign Assistance had no recourse but to drop its objections. The affair would be an all too public glimpse of the repercussions of what NSC staffer Gary Sick called “clumsy” policymaking within the Administration.\textsuperscript{78} Although secured in the end, the sale had failed to come within the 1977 fiscal year. This fact would lead to potential problems in forthcoming arms sales given Carter’s desire to establish an annual ceiling from 1978 onwards. Additionally, the long drawn out saga had been damaging to the Shah and to Iranian–American relations, confirming Miklos’ fears of any wavering in arms supply policy. In Vance’s words:

The effect of this summer-long fight was, perversely, to shake the Shah’s confidence in the United States as a dependable ally. He missed the more open access to U.S. Military equipment he had enjoyed in the early 1970s, and he resented the public criticism.\textsuperscript{79}

As the AWACS standoff between Congress and the Administration ended, it is worth reflecting upon a wider issue. Carter was not only battling Congress and members of his own administration such as Turner. In pursuing the AWACS sale to Iran, Carter was riding roughshod over two key pillars of his arms policy re-think outlined in PD-13. Firstly, one of the central controls in PD-13 was the decision not to introduce paradigm changing military technology into a region, thereby setting the precedent for arms escalation with the Soviet Union. The AWACS clearly violated this principle, no matter how sanitised Iran’s AWACS would be in the end. Secondly, the heart of PD-13 was the establishment of the aforementioned progressively lowering annual arms ceiling. To retain flexibility as this ceiling came into effect, NATO nations, plus Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, had exemptions due to existing American treaty obligations. PD-13 also excluded Israel, albeit abstrusely but, as America’s largest arms customer, Iran was conspicuous via its absence from the policy paper. Nonetheless, Vance later recounted in his memoirs that he had privately reassured the Iranian ambassador that Iran would also be exempted from PD-13. This led to arguments and frustration within the Administration. NSC Staffer Leslie Denend summed it up for Brzezinski:

Though this may seem like a good way to ease the Shah’s disapproval of our policy, it seems to me shortsighted in the extreme. Either we mean what Vance has said, in which case we are never going to decrease arms transfers … or else we don’t mean it.\textsuperscript{80}

What these two points highlight is the extent of the pragmatism embedded at the upper end of the Carter Administration—and how early in its life that pragmatism set in. Whilst the staffer levels were getting their collective heads
around the new arms regime and working hard to establish the policy momentum for PD-13, Vance—and as it would later turn out, Carter and Brzezinski—were already introducing fluidity into the process. It begged the question of why Carter bothered to add the specific countries listed in PD-13 as exceptions when he intended to exempt more nations on an \textit{ad hoc} basis, such as Iran.

Carter cited a diary entry in his memoirs from 31 July 1977 where he noted apathetically—the AWACS sale now temporarily withdrawn from Congress—that he did not care whether the Shah bought the AWACS. He added that the Shah was welcome to pursue those European alternative systems.\footnote{81} If such a sale occurred, those alternatives—such as the Nimrod—would not contravene \textit{PD-13’s} controls, as they were \textit{not} paradigm changing systems and were backward relative to the AWACS. Carter’s curious reflection, when examining the reality of the intense Administration scramble to push the AWACS sale through summer 1977—with Carter actively directing proceedings—seems bizarrely contradictory. What remains certain, however, is that Carter’s professions to Congress, the Shah, and his cabinet were quite the opposite from the position noted in his diary. That Carter chose that one diary entry to essentially carve his own history of the AWACS affair may be attributed to the proximity of the Iranian revolution at the time of writing—1982—and his desire to appear that he had maintained objectivity in his dealings with the Shah. However, the historical record shows this account to be less than accurate, indicating Carter’s unease with the choices he had reluctantly to make in this case.

Further adding to the discrepancies found in Carter’s personal account, he prefaced the decision to approve the AWACS sale in the following way:

\begin{quote}
I was attempting to reduce the sale of offensive weapons throughout the world, but it was not possible to make excessively abrupt changes in current practices, because of the contracts already in existence.\footnote{82}
\end{quote}

This statement is interesting in two ways: First, he does not refer to the AWACS as a defensive weapon. Yet, this was a central argument of the sale put to Congress despite the spurious nature of that claim. Presumably, it had become a frail position on which to remain insistent. Second, there were no contracts in existence in any sense for an Iranian purchase of the AWACS prior to Carter’s offer in mid-1977. The AWACS was not ready for sale until 1977, as Ford had purposefully deferred any foreign AWACS sales pending that readiness. With these points in mind, Carter’s recollection of the AWACS affair is frankly strange. And it goes to the heart of the quandary Carter found himself in with Iran—the wider needs of American security placed him at odds with his personal preferences.

Whilst Carter had come to office with apparently genuine designs for arms control, the Iranian experience demonstrated the necessity for pragmatism.
and flexibility over idealism. As Sullivan cautioned during the raging Congressional debates over AWACS, “a great deal more than the export of airplanes” was involved.\textsuperscript{83} It is also notable that the Congressional opposition to the sale did not dwell primarily on attacking the clear contradictions in Carter’s arms policies to score a political victory. Instead, the Congressional discourse on the AWACS sale consistently focused on issues of proportionality, necessity, and security. Congress put genuine revisionism in American arms policy at the forefront of its concerns—consolidating a clear trend in evidence throughout the mid-1970s. The fact that a major arms sale to Iran was the point at which a line emerged finally in Washington is not surprising. What is perhaps surprising is that Carter and the Congress were on opposing sides of that line.

When viewed in its full detail within the context of Iranian–American arms policies, the AWACS episode serves as something of a missing link in establishing how an arms control and human rights–wielding president spent the end of his first year in office in Tehran toasting an autocrat with a dubious human rights record who was also America’s largest arms purchaser. By maintaining, and expanding, the arms relationship with the Shah via the sale of the AWACS, Carter’s personal and political experience exemplifies the lack of alternatives that existed for American regional policy in the Persian Gulf in the late 1970s. After 30 years of investment and political winnowing, America’s regional options became heavily leveraged on the Shah’s Iran, and more specifically on the arms relationship at the centre of diplomatic affairs.

When faced with the decision to sell, or not to sell, the AWACS to Iran, Carter faced an early test of will that resulted in him throwing his weight behind the spirit of the arms sale regime that was already established by the Nixon/Ford Administrations rather than effect a notable change in American policy. That it took just a few months in mid-1977 for Carter to make that transition is testament to the binding that the Cold War placed on American presidents in general. More specifically, the contradictory accounts of the AWACS episode found in the declassified record and in Carter’s public accounts of events offer new insight into Carter’s personal plight as his ideals met the full force of reality through the course of the gruelling battle his Administration had with Congress over the AWACS sale.

Notes

1. For a representative example see David Farber, \textit{Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America’s First Encounter With Radical Islam} (Princeton, NJ, 2006); David Patrick Houghton, \textit{US Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis} (Cambridge, 2001); Feredoun Hoveyda, \textit{The Shah and the Ayatollah: Iranian Mythology and Islamic Revolution} (Westport, CT, 2003); Hamilton Jordan, \textit{Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency} (London, 1982); Gary Sick, \textit{October Surprise: America’s Hostages in Iran}
and the Election of Ronald Reagan (London, 1992); William H. Sullivan, Mission to Iran (NY, 1981); Kurt Waldheim, In the Eye of the Storm (London, 1985).

2. For the most recent examples, see Christian Emery, US Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution (NY, 2013), 1–92; Luca Trenta, “The Champion of Human Rights Meets the King of Kings: Jimmy Carter, the Shah, and Iranian Illusions and Rage,” Diplomacy & Statecraft, 24/3 (2013), 476–98.

3. There is an awareness of the AWACS affair in recent literature, however accounts only deal with it in passing. Cf. Emery, Iranian Revolution, 35; Trenta, “Champion of Human Rights,” 481. Each deals with the issue in less than one paragraph.

4. See: Kristen Blake, The U.S.–Soviet Confrontation in Iran, 1945–1962: A Case in the Annals of the Cold War (Boulder, CO, 2009); Richard W. Cottam, Iran and the United States, A Cold War Case Study (Pittsburgh, PA, 1988), 66–78; Justus D. Doenecke, “Revisionists, Oil, and Cold War Diplomacy,” Iranian Studies, 3/1 (1970), 96–105; John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947 (NY, 1972), 309–60; Gary R. Hess, “The Iranian Crisis of 1945–46 and the Cold War,” Political Science Quarterly, 89/1 (1974), 117–46; Joseph M. Jones, The Fifteen Weeks: February 21–June 5 1947 (NY, 1955), 50–58; George Lenczowski, Russia and the West in Iran, 1918–1948: A Study in Big Power Rivalry (Ithaca, NY, 1948), 263–315; Robert Rossow Jr, “The Battle of Azerbaijan, 1946,” Middle East Journal, 10/1 (1956), 17–32.

5. See Stephen Kinzer, All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror (Hoboken, NJ, 2003); Steve Marsh, “Continuity and Change: Reinterpreting the Policies of the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations toward Iran, 1950–1954,” Journal of Cold War Studies, 7/3 (2005), 79–123; idem., Anglo American Relations and Cold War Oil: Crisis in Iran (Basingstoke, 2003); Kermit Roosevelt, Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran (NY, 1979); Daniel Yergin, The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power (London, 1991), 420–78.

6. See Stephen McGlinchey, “Lyndon B. Johnson and Arms Credit Sales to Iran 1964–1968,” Middle East Journal, 67/2 (2013), 229–47.

7. See Roham Alvandi, “Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The Origins of Iranian Primacy in the Persian Gulf,” Diplomatic History, 36/2 (2012); Stephen McGlinchey, “Richard Nixon’s Road to Tehran: The Making of the U.S.–Iran Arms Agreement of May 1972,” Diplomatic History, 37/4 (2013), 841–60.

8. State Department Report, Section II: B, “The U.S.–Iranian Military Relationship, 1941–1979.” DNSA [Digital National Security Archive] IR03558.

9. See “PRM/NSC 10—Military Strategy and Force Posture Review, Final Report,” n.d.: http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/prmemandments/prm10.pdf.

10. See William E. Odom, “The Cold War Origins of the U.S. Central Command,” Journal of Cold War Studies, 8/2 (2002), 57–59.

11. Ibid.

12. John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment (Oxford, 1982), 348.

13. Walter LaFeber, America, Russia and the Cold War (NY, 1985), 288.

14. Jimmy Carter: “Tehran, Iran Toasts of the President and the Shah at a State Dinner,” 31 December 1977, American Presidency Project. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7080.

15. For this entire paragraph, see “Memorandum of Conversation: Zahedi, Brzezinski, and William B. Quandt,” 25 January 1977, ZBDM [Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Materials, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] National Security Affairs Collection 7, Subject File: Meat Import Program: 11/77–8/78 through Memcons: Brzezinski: 3–6/79. Box 33. Folder: Memcons, Brzezinski, 1–9/77.
16. See Stephen McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies Towards the Shah’s Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) pp. 94–120.

17. See memorandum for the record, “Foreign Policy and National Security Issues for the 95th Congress,” 2 February 1977. Ibid., Subject File, Box 50. Folder: Presidential Memos for the Record, 2–6/77.

18. Carter to the Shah, 7 February 1977, Plains File [Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] Box 23, Folder: Iran 6/75–12/79.

19. See Brzezinski handwritten notes on NSC “Evening Report,” 10 February 1977. RAC [“Remote Archives Capture Program,” Digitised archival records located on computer disk, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] NLC-3-9-6-1-2; Inderfurth note to Quandt and Sick, 11 February 1977. RAC NLC-15-20-1-2-0.

20. Sick memorandum to Brzezinski, 12 February 1977. RAC NLC-15-20-1-2-0. Gary Sick has read a draft of this article and confirmed the accuracy of this analysis.

21. “Captain Coll” memorandum for Brown, 3 March 1977. DNSA IR01152.

22. Vance memorandum to Carter, 7 March 1977. Plains File Box 37, Folder: State Department Evening Reports, 5/77.

23. See Carter’s handwritten instructions on Ibid.

24. There are no specific details of what exactly Vance outlined or what the NSC/Congress offered in response and the various conflicts (if any). Those documents remain classified. However, outline of the established trajectory of the review reaching Carter is in “President’s Reorganization Project,” June 1977. McIntyre [James T. McIntyre Collection, Donated Historical Material, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] Box 10: Folder “President’s Reorganization Project – Decision Analysis Report, 6/77.

25. Presidential Directive 13, 13 May 1977: http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pd/index.html.

26. See Lucy W. Benson, “Turning the Arms Supertanker: Arms Transfer Restraint,” *International Security, 3/4* (1979), 3.

27. Brzezinski memorandum to Carter, 11 November 1977. Brzezinski [Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President, 31–41: 10/77–1/78.

28. See USAF telegram, “Iranian Air Defense Improvement Study,” to MAAG [Tehran], 13 January 1977, DNSA IR01126; and the Shah to Carter, 27 April 1977, Plains File, Box 23, Folder: Iran, 6/75–12/79.

29. Lawrence J. Korb, “National Security Organization and Process in the Carter Administration,” in Sam Sarkesian, ed., *Defense Policy and the Carter Presidency: Carter’s First Years* (Boulder, CO, 1979), 133; Also see “Global Issues” memorandum for Brzezinski, 12 July 1977, RAC NLC-28-36-2-18-1.

30. Paul Y. Hammond, David J. Louscher, Michael D. Salomone, and Norman A. Graham, *The Reluctant Supplier: U.S. Decisionmaking for Arms Sales* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 35.

31. See: Joanna Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration’s Arms Transfer Restraint Policy* (London, 1995), 132–33.

32. “Global Issues” memorandum to Brzezinski, 10 June 197, RAC NLC-10-3-2-17-7.

33. See The Shah to Carter, 27 April 1977, Plains File, Box 23, Folder: Iran, 6/75–12/79.

34. Atherton briefing memorandum to Vance, 30 April 1977. DNSA IR01164.

35. Unsigned memorandum for Brzezinski, 12 May 1977. RAC NLC-1-2-3-17-7.

36. Atherton briefing memorandum to Vance, 30 April 1977. DNSA IR01164.

37. Granger memorandum to Scowcroft, 13 September 1976, GFL [Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, MI] Presidential Country Files, Iran, Box 13.

38. “Message for the Shah from President Carter,” 24 May 1977, Plains File, Box 23, Folder: Iran, 6/75–12/79.
39. The Shah to Carter, 1 June 1977, Ibid.
40. The amendment found later amalgamation into the 1976 *Arms Export Control Act*.
41. Helms telegram to State Department, 29 March 1976. GFL Country File, Iran-State Department Telegrams, Box 14.
42. Kissinger, “Memorandum of Conversation between Ford, Kissinger and Scowcroft,” 13 August 1976, GFL NSA, Memoranda of Conversations, Box 20.
43. “U.S. Support of Shah of Iran Reinforced by New Pledges During Kissinger’s Visit,” *Wall Street Journal* (9 August 1976).
44. Helms telegram to State Department, 26 August 1976. GFL Country File, Iran-State Department Telegrams, Box 14.
45. See Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah* (Oxford, 2014), 147–52.
46. Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I: The Confidential Diary of Iran’s Royal Court, 1969–1977* (London, 1991), 504, 515–16; Also see Helms telegram to State Department, 25 September 1976, GFL Country File, Iran-State Department Telegrams, Box 14.
47. Statement by Senator Humphrey, 16 September 1976, in *U.S. Arms Sales Policy: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance, September 16, 21, and 24, 1976* (Washington DC, 1976)
48. Testimony of Senator Case, 16 September 1976, in Ibid.
49. Statement by Senator Eagleton, 18 July 1977, in *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance and the Committee on Foreign Relations on Proposed Sale of Seven E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System Aircraft to Iran: July 18, 22, 25, 27 and September 19, 1977* (Washington DC, 1977).
50. Statement by Senator Culver, 18 July 1977, in Ibid.
51. Ibid
52. “Global Issues” memorandum to Brzezinski, 18 July 1977, RAC NLC-28-36-2-20-8.
53. Byrd to Carter, 22 July 1977. Handwriting File [Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] Box 39, Folder: 7/23/77.
54. See Carter and Brzezinski’s notations Ibid.
55. See testimony of Atherton and Marbod, plus the Q & A, 22 July 1977, in *Proposed Sale of Seven E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System Aircraft to Iran*.
56. Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance, the senators each had taken an active interest in the AWACS sale to Iran.
57. See Brzezinski memorandum, “AWACS to Iran,” to Carter, nd, RAC NLC-15-20-1-12-9; Vance memorandum to Brzezinski, 14 July 1977, RAC NLC-16-40-3-23-2.
58. Turner’s testimony reflected his letter and, while that letter and testimony remain classified, his thesis can be clearly determined from the discourse of the various senators and Administration officials. For one example amongst many, see Vance memorandum to Brzezinski, 14 July 1977, RAC NLC-16-40-3-23-2.
59. “Middle East” memorandum to Brzezinski, 25 July 1977, RAC NLC-10-4-2-17-6.
60. “Europe” memorandum to Brzezinski, 25 July 1977, RAC NLC-10-4-2-16-7.
61. Humphrey to Carter, 27 July 1977. Office of the Congressional Liaison [Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA] Box 260, Folder: AWACS.
62. See Benson briefing memorandum to Bennet, 19 August 1977, Ibid.
63. See “Talking Points (AWACS),” and Carter to Turner, 28 July 1977, both Ibid.
64. For example, Carter to O’Neill [Speaker, House of Representatives], 28 July 1977, Ibid.
65. Vance telegram to Embassy [Tehran], 31 July 1977. DNSA IR01208.
66. NSC briefing memorandum, 1 August 1977, RAC NLC-1-3-3-5-9.
67. “Situation Room” memorandum to Brzezinski, 1 August 1977, RAC NLC-1-3-3-4-0.
68. Brzezinski memorandum to Carter, 1 August 1977, RAC NLC-1-3-3-1-3.
69. “Annual Policy and Resource Assessment for Iran—Part One,” in Embassy [Tehran] to State Department DNSA IR01159.
70. See “Intelligence Coordination” memorandum to Brzezinski, 30 August 1977, RAC NLC-10-4-7-12-6.
71. Ibid.
72. Cable memorandum to Carter, 26 August 1977, Handwriting File, Box 46, Folder: 8/27/77.
73. “Global Issues” memorandum to Brzezinski, 10 June 1977, RAC NLC-10-3-2-17-7.
74. See Carter’s handwritten instructions to Brzezinski on Cable memorandum to Carter, 26 August 1977, Handwriting File, Box 46, Folder: 8/27/77.
75. See “Press/Congressional” memorandum to Brzezinski, 6 September 1977, RAC NLC-13-9-7-3-8.
76. See Turner to Brzezinski, 1 September 1977, RAC NLC-7-1-1-12-9.
77. See Gary Sick, All Fall Down: America’s Tragic Encounter With Iran (NY, 1986), 30–32; Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices: Critical Years in America’s Foreign Policy (NY, 1983), 321.
78. Sick, All Fall Down, 32.
79. Vance, Hard Choices, 321.
80. “Global Issues” memorandum to Brzezinski, 31 May 1977, RAC NLC-28-36-2-25-3.
81. Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President (London, 1982), 434–35.
82. Ibid., 435.
83. Sullivan telegram to Vance, 14 July 1977, RAC NLC-16-40-3-23-2.

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