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Foreign Intelligence Information Report

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(1)

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(1)

1. One of the areas currently under investigation as a possible nuclear reactor site in Iran is a 25 to 50 square mile (65 to 130 square kilometer) region northwest of Abadan near the Karun River. Some of the geophysical explorations which were scheduled to be conducted there in late 1975 to help in determining the safety of that area as a reactor site were postponed because of numerous problems that arose. Equipment that was needed to carry out the explorations arrived several weeks late, and shortly after it got there the rainy season began. Unusually heavy rains fell, which resulted in flooding, and this precluded any further activity. Engineers and scientists who had come from other countries, after waiting several weeks for the flood waters to recede, finally gave up and went home. As of early May 1976 the water still had not receded sufficiently for the work to be resumed.
2. The Iranian firm which has the prime contract with the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) for conducting all site studies for nuclear plants in the country is Tehran-Berkeley, a company whose four partners received their PhD's from the University of California at Berkeley. Some of the subcontracts let by the company have gone to foreign consultants and engineers.
3. Foreign personnel who were in Iran in late 1975 to participate in the Karun site studies stayed in Khorramshahr, a short distance from Abadan. These included scientists, engineers and consultants from the US, UK and France. The French group, from CGE, were handling all seismic studies which involved the use of explosives. Since explosives are not allowed to be brought into Iran it was necessary for the CGE people to get the materials they needed from the Iranian government. The Iranian Army was called in to inventory all the explosives that were brought in and out of the test area.
4. The UK engineers were from Wimpeys -- a large UK engineering firm. They were involved primarily in studies of hydraulic conductivity or permeability. They were making measurements in drill holes for hydraulic parameters.
5. Also in Khorramshahr were a number of Iranians, including personnel from Tehran-Berkeley, who were receiving training from a US company in geotechnical procedures.
6. There are a number of obvious advantages to the Karun site, especially if the geophysical explorations prove to be favorable: it is away from

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populated areas; wildlife in the area are probably minimal; it is near a good source of water (the Karun River); the land is not valued for anything else -- it is not agricultural land; there are good dense materials at relatively shallow depths, which should serve as suitable foundation material (clays and silts with minor sand); and there are very dense materials down about 30 feet (9.144 meters) -- which, for construction purposes, is regarded as very favorable. The major disadvantage would seem to be the danger of flooding in the area -- although Iranians who are familiar with the region said this was a rare occurrence; they called it a "10 year flood." Even if the flooding occurred more often than once every 10 years it seems probable that technology exists to solve the problem.

- 7. One question which remains unanswered is the basic intent of the Iranians with regard to determining a suitable site: do they intend to take the type of measurements that would be taken in the US to assure the establishment of a safe site; or would they be content with something less than that? One gets the feeling that there are some political considerations involved, but they may not be important. As an example, a firm called Pandam Engineers was appointed by the government to work on the site studies. This was a group of Iranian engineers who had very little technical know-how. They had a representative who sat in an office and made life miserable for others involved in the site study who were trying to do serious work. One got the impression that someone in Pandam may have been related to Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlevi. Further speculation was that Tehran-Berkeley might have been brought in to supply the technical expertise that Pandam lacked.

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- 9. Nuclear installations already in process in Iran are described as being beset with one trouble after another. The difficulties are believed to be the result of poor design or poor operation.

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