Subject: Iranian Reactions to Appointment of Richard Helms as American Ambassador to Iran

Summary: In reporting appointment of Ambassador-designate Helms as new American envoy to Tehran, local newspapers noted but did not highlight Helms’ position as former CIA Director. Media coverage and private comment by Iranian officials tend to interpret appointment as indication of special importance United States attaches to Iran. All press accounts report that Ambassador Farland will be assuming another important post. End Summary

1. All major English-language and Persian-language newspapers for December 23 frontpaged appointment of Richard Helms as the new American ambassador to Iran. Ambassador Helms’ position as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency was mentioned by all papers but this factor is not highlighted. Noting Ambassador Helms’ closeness to President Nixon and his prominence in American life as important public servant, most articles see his appointment as indicating heightened importance Washington attaches to its relations with Iran.

2. Foregoing theme has been mentioned to me by Foreign Minister Khalatbari and Court Minister Alamnon separate conversations.
ALAM SAW APPROACHING END OF THE VIET'NAW CONFLICT AS FREEING THE UNITED STATES FOR MAJOR EFFORT TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL SOLUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. COURT MINISTER VIEWED APPOINTMENT OF DISTINGUISHED AND ABLE AMBASSADOR HELMS AS SIGNALING THAT NEW AMERICAN PEACE EFFORT IN THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN WITH IRAN AS POSSIBLE BASE FOR SUCH EFFORT.

3. AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, CLANDESTINE IRAN COURIER, PERSIAN LANGUAGE RADIO FOR DECEMBER 23, FORMERLY BROADCASTING FROM EAST GERMANY BUT NOW APPARENTLY MOVED TO BULGARIA, SAW AMBASSADOR HELMS' APPOINTMENT IN SINISTER LIGHT HERALDING RENEWED ROLE BY AMERICAN EMBASSY TEHRAN AS CENTER OF U.S. ESPIONAGE IN IRAN. THERE HAS BEEN NO LOCAL PLAY OF SUCH COMMENTS AND WE UNDERSTAND WORD HAS GONE OUT TO LOCAL PRESS NOT REPEAT NOT ALLUDE TO AMBASSADOR HELMS' PAST CONNECTIONS WITH C.I.A.

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