



John Woolley and Gerhard Peters

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JIMMY CARTER

XXXIX President of the United States: 1977-1981

Remarks to Reporters on American Hostages in Iran and Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan

December 28, 1979

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Secretary of State Vance will proceed to the United Nations tomorrow to press the world's case against Iran in order to obtain the speediest possible release of American hostages, in accordance with the demands which have already been made earlier by the United Nations Security Council and the International Court of Justice.

The United States reserves the right to protect our citizens and our vital interests in whatever way we consider appropriate in keeping with principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. But our clear preference is now, and has been from the beginning of this crisis, for a quick and a peaceful solution of this problem through concerted international action.

We must never lose sight of our basic goals in this crisis—the safety of our fellow citizens and the protection of the long-term interests of the United States. A thoughtful and determined policy, which makes clear that Iran will continue to pay an increasingly higher price for the illegal detention of our people, is the best policy to achieve those goals, and it is the policy that I will continue to pursue.

Another serious development which has caused increased concern about peace and stability in the same region of the world is the recent Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, which has now resulted in the overthrow of the established government and the execution of the President of that country. Such gross interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan is in blatant violation of accepted international rules of behavior.

This is the third occasion since World War II that the Soviet Union has moved militarily to assert control over one of its neighbors, and this is the first such venture into a Muslim country by the Soviet Union since the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan in the 1940's.

The Soviet action is a major matter of concern to the entire international community. Soviet efforts to justify this action on the basis of the United Nations Charter are a perversion of the United Nations that should be rejected immediately by all its members.

I have discussed this serious matter personally today with several other heads of government, all of whom agree that the Soviet action is a grave threat to peace. I will be sending the Deputy Secretary of State to Europe this weekend to meet with representatives of several other nations to discuss how the world community might respond to this unwarranted Soviet behavior. Soviet military action beyond its own borders gives rise to the most fundamental questions pertaining to international stability, and such close and extensive consultation between ourselves and with our allies are urgently needed.

Thank you very much.

REPORTER. Mr. President, do we have the votes in the U.N. Security Council, and do we have the Russians' promise they won't veto our resolution?

THE PRESIDENT. I expect we will see adequate support in the United Nations Security Council for our position.

Q. Have you gotten in touch with Brezhnev?

THE PRESIDENT. I have sent him a message.

Note: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Citation: Jimmy Carter: "Remarks to Reporters on American Hostages in Iran and Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan," December 28, 1979. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31881>.

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