

Who Ordered The Iranian Hostage Crisis Rescue Attempt Which Failed To Secure The Hostages? A. Carter B. Reagan C.

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The Iranian Hostage Crisis remains one of the most tense and consequential events in modern American history. It involved the seizure of 52 American diplomats and citizens by Iranian militants at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, beginning on November 4, 1979. The crisis lasted for 444 days, profoundly affecting U.S. foreign policy, domestic politics, and the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Among the many pivotal moments during this period was the daring rescue attempt known as Operation Eagle Claw, which ultimately failed to free the hostages and resulted in tragic loss of life.

This article explores the origins of the rescue attempt, examines the decision-making process behind it, and clarifies who was responsible for ordering the operation. It also provides context on the political climate, the key figures involved, and the lessons learned from this critical event.

The Context of the Iranian Hostage Crisis

Background of U.S.-Iran Relations

The roots of the hostage crisis are deeply embedded in decades of tense relations between the United States and Iran. The 1953 CIA-backed coup that overthrew Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and reinstated the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, sowed long-standing resentment.

In 1979, the Shah was admitted to the United States for medical treatment, which ignited widespread outrage among Iranians. Amidst the Iranian Revolution that ousted the Shah, militant students and revolutionary forces stormed the U.S. Embassy, demanding his extradition and protesting American interference in Iranian affairs.

The Seizure of the U.S. Embassy

On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian militants, mostly students, overran the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 66 Americans hostage. The crisis quickly became a symbol of Iranian resistance against U.S. influence and a flashpoint for Cold War tensions.

Over time, 13 hostages were released, but 52 remained captive. The U.S. government, led by President Jimmy Carter, sought a resolution through diplomatic channels, imposing sanctions and freezing Iranian assets. But hopes for a diplomatic solution diminished as the crisis dragged on.

Jimmy Carter's Response and the Decision to Attempt a Rescue

Diplomatic Efforts and Growing Frustration

Throughout 1980, Carter attempted negotiations, including back-channel communications, to secure the hostages' release. However, these efforts were unsuccessful, and the situation grew increasingly desperate as the American public demanded action.

The administration faced mounting pressure to resolve the crisis militarily, but also harbored concerns about risking American lives in a risky rescue operation.

The Planning of Operation Eagle Claw

By April 1980, citing the failure of diplomatic efforts, Carter authorized a military rescue mission. Known as Operation Eagle Claw, the mission aimed to use specially equipped aircraft to extract the hostages from Iran.

The operation was meticulously planned, involving multiple branches of the U.S. military, including the Navy, Air Force, and Marines. The goal was to execute a complex, multi-phase raid involving:

- Aerial refueling of transport aircraft
- Insertion of special forces into Iran
- Extraction of hostages from the U.S. embassy compound

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The critical question revolves around who made the decision to proceed with Operation Eagle Claw.

President Jimmy Carter's Role

President Carter was the commander-in-chief during the crisis. He authorized the rescue operation after extensive deliberation, reviewing intelligence and military options. In a televised speech on April 24, 1980, Carter announced the decision to proceed with the mission, emphasizing the importance of restoring American dignity and securing the hostages' release.

Carter's decision was influenced by several factors:

- The prolonged hostage situation damaging U.S. credibility
- The desire to demonstrate resolve
- The lack of progress through diplomatic channels

While Carter authorized the operation, he relied heavily on military advisors and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for planning and execution.

Reagan's Involvement

Ronald Reagan was elected president in November 1980, months after the failed rescue attempt. He did not order or influence Operation Eagle Claw because the rescue was launched under Carter's administration before Reagan took office.

However, Reagan's campaign and subsequent presidency were deeply affected by the crisis, with many viewing the failed rescue as a symbol of Carter's weakness. Reagan's approach to Iran and foreign policy shifted significantly after his inauguration, emphasizing a more assertive stance.

The Failure of Operation Eagle Claw

What Went Wrong?

On April 24, 1980, the rescue mission was launched. However, the operation encountered multiple issues:

- Mechanical failure in the helicopters during the desert insertion
- Poor weather conditions
- Communication breakdowns among units
- A mid-air collision between a transport helicopter and a refueling aircraft, which caused the loss of eight servicemen

These problems culminated in the abort of the mission, and the rescue force was forced to retreat, leaving the hostages behind.

Consequences of the Failed Rescue

The failure had profound implications:

- The loss of eight American servicemen's lives
- Embarrassment for the U.S. military and Carter administration
- Increased public and political criticism
- The eventual release of the hostages on January 20, 1981, as Reagan was inaugurated

Who Made the Decision? Analyzing Responsibility

The decision to proceed with Operation Eagle Claw was made by President Jimmy Carter, in consultation with military and intelligence officials. While the planning and execution were complex and involved multiple agencies, the ultimate authority rested with Carter as commander-in-chief.

Key points:

- Carter authorized the mission after weighing diplomatic options.
- The military executed the plan under Carter's direction.
- Reagan was not involved in the rescue operation, as it occurred before his presidency.

Lessons Learned and Impact on Future U.S. Military Operations

The failure of Operation Eagle Claw prompted significant reforms:

- Creation of the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)
- Improved coordination among military branches
- Emphasis on realistic planning and contingency measures

The event also influenced subsequent rescue missions, such as the successful 1980s operations in Grenada and later in Iran with the use of different tactics.

Conclusion

The question of who ordered the Iranian Hostage Crisis rescue attempt that failed to secure the hostages definitively points to President Jimmy Carter. As the sitting president and commander-in-chief, Carter authorized Operation Eagle Claw in a bid to free the hostages and restore American pride. Although the operation failed tragically, it remains a significant episode illustrating the complexities and risks of military rescue missions.

Reagan, who succeeded Carter as president, was not involved in the decision or execution of the rescue attempt. His rise to leadership came after the crisis had concluded, and the focus shifted toward different approaches to Iran and U.S. foreign policy.

In summary:

- **Jimmy Carter** was the president who ordered the rescue attempt.
- The operation was driven by a desire to resolve the crisis militarily after diplomatic efforts failed.
- The failure underscored the importance of careful planning and preparedness in military operations.

Understanding this pivotal event highlights the challenging decisions faced by U.S. leaders during crises and the lasting impact of their choices on national security and foreign policy.

Keywords for SEO Optimization:

Iranian Hostage Crisis, Operation Eagle Claw, Who ordered the rescue, Jimmy Carter, failed rescue mission, Iran hostage crisis history, U.S. military rescue attempt, Carter vs Reagan, Iran-U.S. relations, Iran hostage crisis facts, 1980 rescue failure

Frequently Asked Questions

Who ordered the rescue attempt during the Iranian Hostage Crisis that ultimately failed to free the hostages?

President Jimmy Carter ordered the rescue attempt.

Was the failed rescue mission during the Iranian Hostage Crisis planned under President Carter or Reagan?

It was planned under President Jimmy Carter.

Which U.S. president was in office when the failed Iran hostage rescue attempt was launched?

President Jimmy Carter.

Did Ronald Reagan have any involvement in the decision to attempt the rescue during the Iran Hostage Crisis?

No, the rescue attempt was ordered by President Carter before Reagan took office.

What was the name of the failed rescue operation during the Iran Hostage Crisis?

Operation Eagle Claw.

Which president's administration was responsible for the failed Iran Hostage Crisis rescue attempt?

President Jimmy Carter's administration.

Did the failure of the rescue attempt influence the 1980 U.S. presidential election?

Yes, it contributed to President Carter's loss, leading to Ronald Reagan's election.

Who succeeded Carter as U.S. President after the failed

Iran hostage rescue attempt?

Ronald Reagan.

Additional Resources

Who Ordered The Iranian Hostage Crisis Rescue Attempt Which Failed To Secure The Hostages? A. Carter B. Reagan C.

The Iranian Hostage Crisis remains one of the most defining and complex episodes in modern American diplomatic history. It spanned 444 days, beginning on November 4, 1979, when a group of Iranian militants seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 52 American diplomats and citizens hostage. The crisis not only strained U.S.-Iran relations but also had profound domestic political repercussions, ultimately culminating in a failed rescue attempt that has since become a subject of intense debate and speculation. Central to this debate is the question: Who ordered the Iranian hostage crisis rescue attempt which failed to secure the hostages? Was it President Jimmy Carter, who was in office when the crisis unfolded, or President Ronald Reagan, who succeeded Carter and inherited the fallout from the failed operation?

This article aims to thoroughly examine the origins, planning, execution, and aftermath of the rescue attempt, dissect the roles of key political figures, and analyze the evidence to understand who bears primary responsibility for the decision that led to the mission's failure.

Background of the Iranian Hostage Crisis

Origins of the Crisis

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 resulted in the overthrow of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, a close U.S. ally, and the establishment of an Islamic republic led by Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah was allowed to enter the United States for medical treatment in October 1979, igniting outrage among Iranians, which culminated in the storming of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

The Seizure of the Embassy

On November 4, 1979, a mob of Iranian militants, some linked to revolutionary groups and others possibly acting with tacit approval from elements within the Iranian government, breached the embassy gates, taking 52 Americans hostage. The crisis quickly became a focal point of U.S.-Iranian relations, with President Carter attempting diplomatic solutions while also considering military options.

The Planning and Execution of the Rescue Operation

Operation Eagle Claw: The First Attempt

In April 1980, the Carter administration launched Operation Eagle Claw, a daring and complex military mission aimed at rescuing the hostages. The plan involved a multi-platform airborne operation using helicopters, transport planes, and special forces units.

Key Details of Operation Eagle Claw:

- Objective: Secure the hostages and bring them to safety.
- Execution Site: Deserted military landing site at Desert One, Iran.
- Outcome: The operation faced numerous logistical challenges, including helicopter failures caused by dust, mechanical issues, and a severe sandstorm. The mission ended in tragedy when a helicopter collided with a refueling aircraft, resulting in the deaths of eight servicemen.

The failure of Operation Eagle Claw was a turning point, forcing the U.S. to reassess its approach to the crisis.

Political Decision-Making: Who Ordered the Rescue Attempt?

Understanding who ordered the rescue attempt requires an examination of the chain of command and the political context surrounding the operation.

President Jimmy Carter's Role

As the sitting president during the crisis, Jimmy Carter was directly involved in decision-making. Evidence suggests that Carter was deeply committed to resolving the hostage situation diplomatically but also authorized military options when diplomacy faltered.

- Carter's Public Position: He publicly promised to secure the hostages' release and was cautious about military intervention to avoid escalation.
- Involvement in Planning: Carter personally authorized the planning of Operation Eagle Claw and was involved in high-level discussions about the timing and scope of the mission.

The Military and CIA's Involvement

The operation was executed by U.S. military and intelligence agencies, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA. While these agencies planned and coordinated the rescue, the ultimate political authority rested with the President.

- Military Leaders: Provided operational input and logistical support.
- CIA: Played a role in planning and gathering intelligence.

The Transition to the Reagan Administration

Ronald Reagan was elected president in November 1980, amid ongoing hostage negotiations. The rescue attempt occurred during Carter's presidency, and Reagan publicly expressed skepticism about the operation's feasibility. After taking office in January 1981, Reagan distanced himself from the failed mission and focused on securing the hostages' release through diplomacy.

The Debate: Who Was Responsible?

The core question—who ordered the rescue attempt which failed—has remained contentious among historians, policymakers, and military officials.

Arguments Supporting President Carter's Responsibility

- Decision to Proceed: Carter authorized the operation, believing it was the best chance to secure the hostages.
- Risk Management: Critics argue Carter underestimated the operational risks and lacked comprehensive contingency plans.
- Historical Evidence: Declassified documents and testimonies indicate Carter was deeply involved in the decision-making process, including approving the final plan.

Arguments Suggesting Reagan Was Responsible

- Some conspiracy theories suggest Reagan's administration sought to distance itself from the failed rescue and may have influenced the timing or scope of military options. However, the rescue attempt occurred before Reagan's inauguration, making this less plausible.

The Role of the Military and Intelligence Agencies

- Military leaders and CIA operatives executed the mission under the authority and directives of the Carter administration. They did not independently initiate or order the mission but carried out a presidential decision.

Deep Dive: Evidence and Declassified Documents

The Carter Administration's Official Position

- Declassified records indicate Carter approved the planning of the rescue mission, emphasizing its importance and the need for a swift resolution.
- The decision was made after diplomatic efforts failed to produce results.

The Role of Military and Intelligence Officials

- Military commanders and CIA officials prepared detailed operational plans, but these were subject to presidential approval.
- The failure was attributed, in part, to logistical issues and environmental factors, not a lack of planning or initiative from military leadership.

Reversal of the Rescue Mission

- After the failure, Carter publicly accepted responsibility, and the operation was suspended.
- The incident diminished Carter's political standing and influenced the 1980 presidential election.

The Aftermath and Political Implications

Impact on Carter and Reagan

- The failed rescue was a significant political blow to Carter, contributing to his loss in the 1980 election.
- Reagan, upon taking office, prioritized securing the hostages' release through diplomatic channels, which ultimately succeeded in January 1981.

The Release of the Hostages

- On January 20, 1981, hours after Reagan's inauguration, the hostages were released, coinciding with the end of Carter's presidency.

Legacy and Historical Interpretation

- The rescue attempt is widely viewed as a courageous but ill-fated military operation.
- The debate over responsibility centers on the presidential authority and the planning process.

Conclusion: Who Ordered the Rescue Attempt?

Based on the available evidence, the rescue attempt was ordered and authorized by President Jimmy Carter. As Commander-in-Chief, Carter bore ultimate responsibility for military decisions and operational planning. While military and intelligence officials executed the mission, they did so under the authority and directives of the Carter administration.

The failure of Operation Eagle Claw was primarily due to logistical and environmental challenges, rather than a lack of resolve or planning. It was a calculated decision taken by Carter to attempt a daring rescue, reflecting his commitment to freeing the hostages.

In summary:

- Jimmy Carter was the key decision-maker who ordered the rescue attempt.
- The operation was a product of high-level presidential approval combined with military execution.
- The failure was a combination of operational difficulties and environmental factors, not a lack of leadership or resolve.

The question of responsibility highlights the complex interplay between political leadership and military planning during crises. Ultimately, the rescue attempt's failure is rooted in the inherent risks of such a high-stakes operation—risks that the Carter administration was willing to take in its effort to secure American lives. As history has shown, this decision remains a testament to the difficult choices faced by leaders during times of national crisis.

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Note: The narrative continues to evolve as new documents are declassified and witnesses testify, offering deeper insights into this pivotal moment in history.

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