A Crisis of Choices

Weigh the effects of diplomacy and a failed rescue attempt

USH.C.8.1.D "Evaluate the impact of the diplomatic standoff of the Iran Hostage Crisis and the failed rescue mission."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline actions U.S. leaders took during the crisis, then circle their effects. Write 1 beside a circled effect that happened soon and 2 beside one that lasted longer.

The Standoff in Tehran

1. On November 4, 1979, Iranian students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran after a revolution had overthrown Iran's U.S.-backed shah. The United States had recently admitted the shah for medical treatment, angering Iranians who wanted him returned to face trial. Fifty-two Americans remained captive for 444 days. The captors demanded changes in U.S. policy, while President Jimmy Carter refused to hand over the shah. An embassy, normally a place for official talks, became the center of a standoff. Each side faced pressure at home, making concessions difficult and leaving the captives in danger.

2. Carter tried diplomacy and economic pressure instead of immediately using force. His administration froze Iranian assets in the United States and sought help from other countries. Talks stalled, and news reports kept the hostages' plight before American audiences. In April 1980, Carter approved Operation Eagle Claw, a secret military mission to free the captives. Equipment problems and a dust storm forced the team to cancel the attempt before it reached Tehran. During the withdrawal, a helicopter struck a transport plane at a desert staging site, killing eight U.S. service members. No hostages were rescued, and Iran moved captives to different locations afterward.

3. The failed mission made Carter's government look unable to protect Americans abroad, although the crisis was only one factor in his 1980 election defeat. Iran and the United States continued indirect negotiations, with Algeria acting as a mediator. Under the January 1981 Algiers Accords, the United States agreed to release frozen Iranian assets under specific terms, and Iran agreed to free the hostages. They were released on January 20, the day Ronald Reagan became president. The long ordeal damaged trust between the two governments. It also raised a lasting question: when citizens are held abroad, how should leaders weigh negotiation, economic pressure, and the risks of force?

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the dispute over the shah make the embassy seizure difficult to resolve through diplomacy?

2. How effective were Carter's early diplomatic and economic steps at ending the standoff? Use evidence from the passage.

3. How did the failed rescue mission affect both Americans and the chances of a later rescue?

4. How did the crisis end, and what political or diplomatic costs remained?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise Carter just after the failed rescue attempt. In 75 to 100 words, recommend a next step to seek the hostages' release, use two specific details from the passage, and explain one risk to U.S.-Iran relations.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.8.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline actions U.S. leaders took during the crisis, then circle their effects. Write 1 beside a circled effect that happened soon and 2 beside one that lasted longer. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the dispute over the shah make the embassy seizure difficult to resolve through diplomacy?	**The captors wanted the shah returned, but Carter refused. Pressure on both sides made concessions difficult.**
2	How effective were Carter's early diplomatic and economic steps at ending the standoff? Use evidence from the passage.	**They did not end it at first. The United States froze Iranian assets and sought help, but talks stalled and the hostages remained captive.**
3	How did the failed rescue mission affect both Americans and the chances of a later rescue?	**Eight U.S. service members died and no hostages were freed. Iran then moved captives to different locations, complicating another rescue attempt.**
4	How did the crisis end, and what political or diplomatic costs remained?	**An agreement reached through indirect negotiations led to the hostages' release. The crisis contributed to Carter's election defeat and damaged trust between the two governments.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would recommend renewing indirect talks through another country while keeping economic pressure in place. The first talks stalled, so a mediator might give both governments a way to discuss terms without making a public concession. I would not attempt another rescue right away. The first mission ended with eight U.S. service members dead, and Iran moved the captives afterward. A new military attempt could put more lives at risk and deepen mistrust between the governments. Negotiations might take longer, but they could offer a path to release without another deadly confrontation.

Accept supported judgments about effectiveness that distinguish the hostages' eventual release from the earlier failure to free them. For Your Turn, accept different recommendations if students cite two specific passage details and explain a plausible diplomatic risk.