

The Langley Files: CIA's Podcast
FILE 013 – PART I
The Side of the Argo Mission You've Never Heard - Infiltration

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Walter: At CIA, we work around the clock and across the globe to help keep Americans and others around the world safe. Secrecy is often vital to our work.

Dee: But we're committed to sharing what we can when we can. So let us be your guides around the halls of Langley as we open our files and speak with those who have dedicated themselves to this mission.

Walter: These are their stories.

Walter and Dee: This is The Langley Files.

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Walter: Here on The Langley Files, we work to introduce you to the people and professions of CIA, and along the way, to share some of the Agency's tips and tricks in the event they are helpful in your own life. But today, for our Season Two finale, we're going to do something different. We're going to open up one of our files and dive deep into a single CIA operation, breaking it down moment by moment.

Dee: You could call it a Mission Report.

Walter: And we're turning to none other than an operation that has been referenced several times on the show, an operation that looms large among those that CIA has declassified.

Dee: In 1979, armed protestors stormed the US Embassy in Tehran, Iran, taking scores of Americans hostage and starting a standoff that captured the attention of the entire world. But six Americans managed to avoid being taken—only to find themselves stranded in what had suddenly become hostile territory.

Walter: To get them out, CIA hatched a plan straight out of fiction: send CIA officers disguised as filmmakers into Iran, train the stranded Americans to impersonate a film crew, and lead the entire group back out past Iranian security at the border. The name of the fake film they were pretending to scout for: ARGO.

Dee: Now, this is a mission that some listeners might think they know. After all, it's been the subject of an Academy Award winning film starring and directed by Ben Affleck. In the film, Affleck plays Tony Mendez, the real-life CIA master of disguise and false documentation who spearheaded the operation and snuck into Iran to carry it out.

Walter: Those listeners will remember that, in the movie version of these events, Affleck's character sneaks into Iran alone. But here, in a hallway of the real-life CIA Headquarters, there's a painting commemorating the operation. In it, Tony sits at a table in Tehran, hard at work on the final preparations for the exfiltration of the six Americans. And in that painting, there's someone else working alongside him. Someone whose face isn't visible and whose name the plaque beneath the painting doesn't reveal, even here in CIA Headquarters.

Dee: And that's because in real life, Tony Mendez didn't sneak into Iran alone. In real life, there was a second CIA officer there with him. Someone who undertook this daring operation alongside Tony. Someone whose identity has remained a secret for the ensuing years... until now.

Walter: Because today on The Langley Files, you're going to meet this previously undisclosed hero of the ARGO operation. You'll learn his name and background, and you'll hear about one of the most famous episodes in CIA history from a perspective that's never before been made public ... his.

Dee: So stay tuned, because whether you've seen the movie, studied these events, or just coming in from the cold, this is a spy history like you've never heard it before.

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Walter: So let's start by turning back the clock. The year is 1979 and the place is Tehran, Iran, where protests are forming outside the US Embassy. To help us understand how we got here and what's about to happen next, we're turning to one of CIA's in-house historians, Brent. Brent, thanks for being with us here today.

Brent: Sure. Happy to do it.

Dee: Now before we dive in, Brent can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Brent: Well, I am ... I'm a CIA historian. I used to be an analyst for a long time. I worked on the Middle East. And now I have one of the coolest jobs at the agency. I get to read about a lot of neat stuff and talk about a lot of neat stuff to people like today. And, you know, help people to capture the histories of things that have gone well and sometimes things that haven't gone well because you know, we pride ourselves on being an organization that learns from our mistakes as well as our successes. And so, I think it speaks a lot that we even have a history staff, and it's it shocks people sometimes to find out that we have professional historians running around, but we do.

(music begins)

Walter: So, Brent, what does Iran look like on November 4th, 1979? What kind of government is it? And why are people protesting and protesting outside the US Embassy in particular?

Brent: On November the 4th, when the protests are going on, the main cause for that is that the United States had made a decision to allow the former Shah of Iran, the King of Iran, into the United States for medical treatment. The backstory there is that the United States had supported the Shah for 25 years. He had been one of our closest allies in the Middle East. But his was an oppressive regime. And so the Iranian people rose up against him throughout 1978 with protests seemingly every week, and it finally reaches a point where in the first few weeks of 1979 he decides to flee the country and does so. So he flees. He travels all over the world. And, um, he finally reaches out to the United States government and says, you know, I have cancer and I need medical treatment of the most advanced kind that it can only be found in the United States. And so President Carter was under a lot of pressure to admit him into the United States for that treatment. He held off for as long as he could. He actually had meetings with his staff where he said, what happens if we let him into the country and then people occupy our Embassy and take our diplomats hostage? And so they really understood the threat. But in the end, Carter made that decision and let him come. And a few days later, these protests erupted outside of the US Embassy in Tehran. It was actually very well planned by the people that staged it. They understood what they were trying to accomplish and how to get into the compound and so forth. They had purchased food and water

and things. They were ready for basically a standoff against their own government. They were going to hold it for a while as long as they could. But what really winds up happening is they get there, and unbeknownst to them, uh, the leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, decides to side with them and decides to support them because he thinks it's a great propaganda win. And, uh, so he does so and it starts the 444-day crisis.

(music ends)

Walter: We should also go back a step further.

Brent: President Eisenhower made the decision to stage a covert action in Iran in 1953 to remove the Prime Minister, Mohammed Mosaddegh. And the reason he did that was because Mosaddegh had nationalized Iran's oil. And in doing so basically cut out what today we know as British Petroleum. And so you're talking about a massive hit to an already crippled British economy. So President Eisenhower is under a lot of pressure to do something and he decides to stage a covert action and the CIA launches an operation called TPAJAX.

Walter: So in our fourth episode, a fellow CIA Historian, Dr. David Robarge, said that most CIA covert actions, many of which have been declassified so folks can look these up and read about them for themselves, actually not only didn't counter democratically elected or popularly elected governments, but in many cases actually bolstered them. We should acknowledge, though, that this is, therefore, a really significant exception to that rule.

Brent: Yep. This is one of the exceptions to that, it is, and and in the macro sense, the argument it wasn't about democracy in Iran from Eisenhower's perspective, it was about defending democracy worldwide in that case because the Soviet Union bordered Iran. And Iran set on top of Persian Gulf oil, and this was a very real concern in both in Washington and London and in Allied nations that if the Soviet Union became more influential in Iran, and in fact, if a Communist government took over in Iran, then the control of a huge amount of the world's oil would have fallen essentially behind the Iron Curtain.

Walter: Has the CIA declassified information on this subject? Can folks look this up and read more about it for themselves?

Brent: Absolutely. Yup. Absolutely. This is this is one of the operations. There's roughly 50 covert actions that have been declassified, and TPAJAX is one of them.

(music begins)

Dee: So we're talking now in November 1979. There's a new revolutionary government in place and a crowd is building outside of the Embassy. Can you tell us what's going on at this point?

Brent: So, as the crowd is trying to get into the Embassy, several things happened very quickly. First of all, there's another complex within the compound itself. The compound's massive. It still is. It's been turned into a museum in Tehran, sort of an anti-American museum. But on the far side of the compound from where the protesters breached the walls was a Consulate building where people would line up to get visas to come to the United States. That's where our six diplomats, who wind up being important in our story, that's where they were located that day. So they were far enough across the compound that as the main Embassy buildings were being raided, they had enough time to get away.

(music ends)

Dee: So we'll get back to those six Americans who are now on the run, but back here stateside, both the US government and CIA specifically are tracking events that are happening over there, correct?

Brent: Yeah, absolutely. So you know, we we've got, obviously the State Department and Embassy is, you know, they're reporting, but so are our people there on the ground reporting as long as long as they can while they're able to keep people outside the rooms, you know. They locked the secure vaults, and and they they held out as long as they could, destroyed documents for as long as they could, until the occupiers started threatening to kill people outside the door. And that's when the the charge d'affaires at the time, we didn't have actually have an ambassador in country. The charge d'affaires at the time, who was at a different building in Tehran on the phone said, okay, let's just let them in. And so they did, and that's when basically Tehran Embassy went offline.

Walter: And meanwhile our six Americans are trying to find safe harbor in what has immediately become an incredibly hostile city, filled with revolutionary forces on the lookout for anyone even associated with Americans—let alone Americans themselves. So, what do these six Americans do next?

Brent: They got word of what was happening. They left. They didn't all leave as a group, they, some of them ran into each other on the street, um, you know, as they were trying to get away. And then they agreed to, you know, to seek help from allied Embassies.

(music begins)

Walter: Right. Multiple friendly countries either step up, or are willing to step up to help these Americans now on the run, but a lot of locations aren't safe for them – they're simply under too much scrutiny, right? And in the end, one particular ally is both willing and able to provide what will become a lasting place for them to hide out.

Brent: In the end, they wind up with the Canadians.

Walter: The first of what will be many shout-outs to our neighbor from the north here.

Brent: You know, the Canadians put themselves in physical danger by doing this, I mean, the anti-Americanism that was happening at the time was insanely intense in Tehran. And so, the Canadian Ambassador and his staff, they definitely put themselves in harm's way by taking care of our folks the way they did.

(music ends)

Walter: And that's Canadian Ambassador Ken Taylor, his wife, and their staff.

Dee: How does the US Government, at this point, try to handle this particular hostage situation, where you have, you know, six Americans who are hiding out in the Canadian Ambassador's residence? What's going on?

Brent: Well, it took a while, because the State Department really wanted to try every avenue that it that it could. It had several different plans that it proposed to get folks out and, just using diplomacy and trying to make something happen with the Iranian government. But it was really difficult because the Iranian government kind of falls apart because of the hostage taking. There was an interim government that resigns in protest over this. And so there's not really anybody for us to talk to for a little while. So you know, the Carter administration, the State Department, they're trying to come up with with, you know, ways of diplomatically getting them out. And the thing to remember, too, about this is that this had

happened earlier in the year. This had happened on the 14th of February. There had been an earlier incursion into the Embassy by protesters. They actually referred to that as the St. Valentine's Day Open House because it happened on the 14th of February, and in that instance, Ayatollah Khomeini sent representatives down to the Embassy and told the people that had taken the Embassy to go home and to let those people go, to let the Americans go, that he hadn't sanctioned it. And a lot of people in Washington were telling themselves, that's what's going to happen again. We just have to be patient and, they'll come down off the ledge on this. And that's not what happened. Khomeini had a completely different view of this. He saw it as a way of further radicalizing the country behind his leadership. And so he used it as a propaganda tool for himself, and refused to back down.

Walter: So when is CIA called upon to find a way to get those six Americans out?

Brent: You know, as time is going on now, the State Department doesn't have very good options. One that they blessedly shot down, which is depicted in the movie where they talk about this, was there was a notion put forward by the State Department – hey, let's get bicycles for all all the diplomats and we'll get them accreditation as teachers who, you know, had come to Iran to teach and they'll ride to the closest border crossing and they'll that's and they'll come out that way. And, various analysts at CIA and at State, I think, sort of said no, that's not really viable for any number of reasons. It's not a very believable story. And not only that, but you're you're talking about traveling across pretty large tracts of land in winter in Iran, and it can be pretty cold and nasty.

(music begins)

Brent: And so, they bring in CIA. They bring in specifically Tony Mendez, who, he is an absolute expert at this point in doing these kinds of exfiltration. He's done them in different parts of the world, going back to the earlier part of the 1970s. Tony worked for the Office of Technical Services, OTS. And that's where our, you know, makeup people are, our disguise people, our forgers, document forgers and so forth. That's where they worked. And it's his team there in OTS, you know, people that have loads of experience traveling overseas and sort of doing reconnaissance of how you get in and out of an airport successfully and that kind of thing. Tony had done that himself. His team had done that, so you have got a lot of people with a lot of experience, uh, that could formulate, you know, a workable plan. And that's what they did. They start coming up with ideas separate from the State Department. And the most famous idea that they come up with, of course, is what we all remember from ARGO.

(music ends)

Dee: And this is the plan where Tony will sneak into Iran disguised as a filmmaker, rendezvous with those six Americans hiding out in the Canadian Ambassador's residence, disguise them all as a film crew, and bring the whole group out. But Tony's not doing this alone, is he?

(music begins)

Brent: So when he decides he's gonna go into Tehran, and it's been approved by the federal government, because it wasn't just a CIA decision, it had to be approved by the National Security Council. Tony knows he's gonna need somebody to go with him so he leans on another OTS veteran.

Walter: And now we finally get to the mystery man from that painting here in the hallway of CIA Headquarters—the second, previously-undisclosed Agency officer who snuck into Iran alongside Tony Mendez.

Brent: Ed Johnson.

Dee: Ed Johnson.

Walter: Ed Johnson.

Brent: And Ed Johnson fit the bill. In Mendez's book, he refers to him as Julio, and he describes him as as having studied at the Sorbonne. In terms of his languages, he spoke several, including French, German, Spanish, Arabic.

Dee: Now as we said in the introduction, some years ago, Ed participated in what we call a debrief of the ARGO operation, so he was speaking with some of our historians. And today—for the first time ever—we're going to be sharing portions of that recording with you. So here is Ed Johnson himself, describing his background, in his own words.

(music ends)

Ed: I was 11 Bravo. It was infantry. And, uh, basically I came to the Agency. I think after graduation from college, I had applied. I had, I had a major in French. I was raised speaking Spanish with a lot of Cuban and Puerto Rican friends. So I had good Spanish, and I was, I didn't, I wasn't I wasn't accepted at that point in time. Then I went off to teach English in Saudi Arabia and spent a year, year and a half there and picked up, uh, decent Arabic for that for that time. After finishing that, I went through and traveled through Egypt and Jordan, much of the much of the Arab world and got to Paris and went for a master's degree program there. And, uh, after having finished that, I again tossed in an application form for the Agency, and I came home and was interviewed and hired. So it was, it was after after having gotten the on on the ground experience in the Middle East and the educational experience and the language into play, what have you, that I was considered to be a good candidate.

Walter: And so Tony has his team set and his right-hand man identified in Ed Johnson, but he needs to build out that cover story that will get the two of them safely into Iran—and then he needs to get the six Americans out. So, how does he go about doing that?

(music begins)

Brent: So when Tony was coming up with the idea, or when they were sort of locking down what they were going to do. He'd famously already been to Hollywood and met with John Chambers, the makeup artist, the famous and and highly regarded makeup artists that you know, had worked on things like the Planet of the Apes and, you know, Oscar winner for his work and so forth. And Tony had work with John in the past, I mean, he consulted with him for his makeup and special effects expertise, you know, which was useful in disguise matters. And he'd actually visited John on set. And John would introduce him as his old Army pal, as he would take him around to movie lots. So Tony asked John Chambers as they were coming up with this plan, sort of, how many people would you need on a sort of a site visit or a location scouting. And Tony actually asked him, you know, would six or seven or eight people be about right? And he said that John sort of smiled like he knew where he was going with this, and, he's like, yeah, he said that that would be about right. And that's when Tony told him the whole idea of what what he wanted to do was to get into Tehran. He told him that there was, you know, about the existence of the houseguests as the Canadians referred to them, and John and he came up with an idea. And so the idea was different members of the team of the location scouting team. You know you have a producer, you'd have a writer. You have a director. You'd have, you know, have a cinematographer. You know you'd have

different people doing different things. And so, with the help of the folks in OTS, they would come up with some ideas for disguise to make them. It's not, I mean, it is a disguise, but it's kind of funny when you think about it. If you've seen the movie, they did a really good job of depicting this, that you're going to take some very formal and even arguably, plain dressing people, you know, that work for the State Department, and you're going to make them Hollywood, and that's exactly what they did. So they came up with ideas for flamboyant dress and different ways of, you know, like women wearing their hair differently and and so on in order to make them look like Hollywood people. And so that was what they that's what they came up with.

Dee: But to go in disguised as filmmakers, Tony and Ed would need a film—or at least the appearance of one. To talk to us about that angle of the story, we have with us here today, Rob Byer, Director of the CIA Museum, which houses artifacts from the ARGO operation—including a script for a film never intended to be made.

(music ends)

Rob: When you look at this operation, one thing that's very clear is the role of partners in making this a successful operation. And one of the great partners in the story is John Chambers. He was a very successful makeup artist. He had won an Oscar for his work on Planet of the Apes. And many years before the events of this story he had been called in to consult for a potential sci-fi theme park in Colorado. And the underlying theme of this theme park was not only that it was a theme park, but that its thrust was the Middle East. That one investor was trying to use basically the Walt Disney of Colorado sci-fi theme parks, I guess. And it was very interesting. So he had this very large idea for this theme park. And he needed someone to draw out all the concepts for the theme park as well as he wanted artwork for the movie as well. So he turned to Jack Kirby. Now Jack Kirby, along with Stan Lee, created the Marvel Comic Universe, and if you've seen the movie The Eternals, if you go see the comic book artwork for The Eternals, you'll notice a great deal of similarity between that comic book artwork and the artwork for Argo the movie as well as for this theme park, very similar, very beautiful artwork and that is on display. The conceptual artwork for the movie Argo is on display in the new museum. So John Chambers was called in to consult on a movie that was going to be used to promote this theme park, sort of the Walt Disney model. Right? You create different themes in the different rides, different venues in the theme park, and then you make movies about it. And then that sort of feeds, it's like a feedback loop between the two things. And so, John knew about this theme park. He knew about this movie. And the theme park never went anywhere. It fell into bankruptcy before it could even get started. The script for it fell on the dustbin of history, but John Chambers remembered it. And so when Tony comes to Hollywood and he says to John, I need I need a script. So John remembers the script he worked on, and it's perfect.

(music begins)

Walter: Was there anything about the script, ultimately known as Argo, that lent itself particularly well for the kind of movie that might plausibly be filmed in Iran?

Rob: One of the reasons why Argo was the perfect script for this mission is it was actually a script about a Middle Eastern sci-fi adventure. So it had the right location. So when a scouting location crew comes from Canada to look through the streets of Tehran for, you know, to be included in this movie, it makes perfect sense. And that's why this movie was selected for that very reason, that it provided not only the cover of a movie, but a cover of a movie that would take place in a place like Tehran.

Brent: In fact, there's even a place in the script, um talking about, a bazaar, you know in the middle of the city that would be great, and Tehran is famous for its bazaars.

Rob: And that's I think, what you think about the creativity and the ingenuity that goes into these types of operations, to, of the thousands and thousands of films out there to find the one that would, you know, somehow make it plausible why a scouting location crew would be in Tehran so soon after the revolution. I mean, that that's really a testament to these officers and and what they thought of. My favorite quote from Tony about this was it was his best bad idea. And I think that's, uh, that's a great way to call it.

(music ends)

Dee: For sure. So it was a full-fledged script right? I mean, they came across and they put it forward as a movie, is that correct?

Rob: So correct. They basically, and believe me, it is a clunker of uh. To be honest, I don't know if, I'll take that back. I don't think it is a full script, meaning like you have, script style - interior of the moons of Alderaan at dawn, you know, fade up from black.

Dee: He just. You nailed that. Thank you.

Rob: But it does have, uh, you know, the full concept of what the movie would be. And it's probably about 40 or 50 pages going through all of the different ideas for the movie. So in, in addition, as you're thumbing through this concept is all of the incredible art of Jack Kirby as well. So I love that artifact.

Dee: And Tony and John Chambers set up a whole fictional film studio for this, right? In order to really sell it?

Rob: Correct. So, um, Studio Six Productions had a phone line, and that's who anyone could call in. And, and the idea was that when they're over in Tehran if anyone was suspicious and wanted to call in to be able to verify, there's a phone number on a business card that they call, someone picks up, says Studio Six Productions. You know, we're making a movie called Argo. Yes. How can we help you?

(music begins)

Brent: Tony went out and planned this with John Chambers. It's funny. They rented space on a on a movie lot, office space, that had just been vacated by Michael Douglas. The actor had just actually had that same space because he was the director of a movie called The China Syndrome. And so they had literally just moved out. So a vacancy notice had just gone up, a gentleman that John Chambers worked with, um, he was aware of the vacancy, so they read him in, and he's going to be the person who runs the studio for the next few days, or, you know for the foreseeable future, until the operations over. This gentleman is going to basically be there with his wife to answer the phones. If anybody calls, they are, you know, Studio Six Productions. Um, that's that's what they call themselves because of the number of uh, houseguests. There were six of them. That's why they went with Studio Six. And so they actually had for all intents and purposes, a functioning Hollywood studio. And one of the interesting things about that is these things were very fly by night by nature, you know, the studios, they would come and they would go, so there was nothing unusual. If somebody really did the research, how long his Studio Six been around? It wouldn't be out of the ordinary for the for only having been around a few days or a week or two, you know, that that kind of thing happens in Hollywood.

Rob: And so if anyone were to call in, it legitimizes, uh, Tony Mendez. It makes his mission believable and credible, and allows them to do the work they need to do.

Dee: And many of those artifacts from that movie that was never intended to be made are actually on display here at CIA Museum in Langley. And because our museum is not open to the public, Rob and his colleagues work to make many of those items available for everyone online to check out for themselves, and we'll post a link in the show notes to where you can go see them for yourself.

(music ends)

Walter: Okay, so the fake Hollywood film studio, complete with a fake film in perpetual pre-production, is now up and running. Next, Tony and Ed are going to need completely believable false documents to sneak themselves into Iran disguised as filmmakers—and additional false documents to sneak the six Americans stranded there back out with them. So, how do they go about securing those?

(music begins)

Brent: The Canadian government actually gives the US government six real Canadian passports, not fakes, they're authentic Canadian passports, uh, that would be provided by Tony and Ed to the six Americans in hiding, so that they can pretend not only to be Canadian, but to be different people altogether. This is really an extraordinary act, you know, when you think about it, of support by the Canadians. And this would not have been possible were it not for a very special legislation passed by the Canadian Parliament. Tony had actually gone to Ottawa with another OTS officer that worked for him, left him behind in Ottawa, and he worked with the Canadians to ensure that they got passports. And after that had been done, now you needed the expert on the ground to make those passports look believable in terms of past travel and that kind of thing. So you've got to get all the right stamps in there that makes it look like these are real Hollywood people. They've been here, there and everywhere. And so that's what the other OTS person did, who stayed behind in Ottawa. And then he assisted in not only shipping out via diplomatic pouch, Canadian diplomatic pouch, to Tehran, not only the documents, but also things like disguise stuff that we purchased and sent up to Ottawa. They put it in the bags, and they shipped it out in the in the diplomatic bags so that when Tony and Ed arrived, they could then take that to the Ambassador's house where the the houseguests were staying and they would have everything that they needed.

Dee: And now, let's turn back to Ed.

Ed: So the user of a false document had to be knowledgeable of not simply just language and culture, et cetera, had to be knowledge knowledgeable of environment. So there's a lot more, a lot more to the business of providing false documentation than simply the documentation and caches and the stamps. The documentation preparation, the working with the Canadians to get the passports and to put some aspects of the back traveling was done back home. The package was then pouched out to out to Tehran to the Embassy of Canada and, uh, they were finished up there.

Walter: So the Canadians play a huge role in this.

Brent: Huge role, huge role. Absolutely. Um, and they they deserve a ton of credit because, you know this is it's, you know, they're they're close friends and then there are friends that will give you fake passports, you know?

(music begins)

Dee: Okay, so Tony and Ed have—secured the most authentic false documents possible. So what happens next?

Brent: Well, the final stages Tony described them in his book, um, in a couple different books, as sort of getting into character, as you can imagine. Tony actually had a specific jacket that he wore that was a bit more flashy and he described it as European, as part of his cover, you know, his cover identity was from a European country. And so, um, he he starts to get into character.

Ed: There's always a what if. Before any big operation went off there was always the big meeting at the division level and where you gave your plan and then usually branch chief would say, well, what if, what if, what if? So we learned quickly to have a lot of what ifs for. For example, what if all of a sudden they, this happened several times as you're approaching the border airport at the airport, the asset says, uh, that fellow, I know him. I was in a fight with him last night. Okay, what do you do? And you always have an escape route. And if you want to get into the exfiltration game, all it takes is one tiny mistake and you've got a ruined ruined case.

Brent: So Ed was already posted overseas at the time of this, he wasn't in the United States. And so Tony flew to Europe and his stopover in Europe before he went into Iran met with Ed there, where they went over the final details of the plan. They actually met with someone who had traveled in and out of Iran recently. They met with this gentleman as well, there in in Europe, and he sort of gave them his approval, his thumbs up. Uh, you know, he heard about their cover story. He checked them out in terms of what they were wearing and, considered Ed's language capabilities and everything. And he said, yeah, you guys will be fine.

(music ends)

Walter: Wow.

Brent: Uh, they got some additional documentation that they needed, including visas from Iranian officials to fly into Iran, as you know, using the Argo movie reconnaissance trip or whatever you wanna call it as their cover. So they got those visas and then they proceeded to Tehran.

Dee: Alright, so at this point, Tony and Ed are on a plane heading into that very place where scores of their countrymen have been taken hostage and another six are living in hiding. They land. So, what's next? What's the next sequence of events here?

(music begins)

Brent: So when they land, you know, these are you know, these are exfiltration experts and so the very first thing they do when they land is is they switch it on. They start to, observe very carefully and sort of take mental notes of everything that they're seeing at the airport there in Tehran at Mehrabad Airport. And, one of the very slick things that Tony describes Ed as having done was you had to fill out these yellow sheets of paper when you enter and when you leave Iran. And there was a whole stack of them at one place and that Ed laid his newspaper down onto the stack. And as he walked away you know, with a with a nice little sleight of hand, he grabbed multiple multiple copies of this little yellow paper so they would have them for the houseguests. And so they would have extras if they made any mistakes in, you know, sort of forging those entry stamps and that kind of thing. Um, so you know that that that sort of sleight of hand is is something that OTS is, sort of famously known for and he said the way Tony described it was that that he barely even noticed what Ed had done and then just sort of smiled to himself.

What a slick move it had been. So they leave the airport. What they're trying to do on that very first day is they're trying to get to the Canadian Embassy. They want to talk to the Canadian Ambassador, and you know who's been the hero in the story to that point. And so, they use a map. Well, you can't use a Department of Defense grid coordinate map. You can't have that on you if you're under deep cover. Because if you get stopped and searched, people are gonna have some questions why you have that. So they wind up getting a map basically, from a travel agency of downtown Tehran. Well, the map is not very accurate. And so they they proceed to where they think the Canadian Embassy is based on the map and, it turns out, it is immediately across the street. The place that they arrive is immediately across the street from the American Embassy, which is where the hostages are held, which is where there are loads of revolutionary types and hostage takers coming and going, and they are literally right across the street from this.

Ed: We got a cab down there, and it was the actual Swedish Embassy, which was located about a stone's throw, pardon the phrase, a stone's throw from the US Embassy. So as we were there, there at the Embassy of Sweden, wondering what the hell am I doing here?

Brent: It's the Swedish Embassy. It's the wrong place.

(music ends)

Walter: So Tony and Ed have landed in Tehran in alias, gotten through customs and border control, and made their way to what they think is the Canadian Embassy, only to find themselves next to the very spot, where, at that moment, armed Iranian revolutionaries are holding the other Americans hostage.

(music begins)

Dee: And on Part Two of this Mission Report, we'll hear what happens next. So tune in next time for the conclusion of this file and of The Langley Files, Season Two.

Walter: We'll be seeing you ... back here real soon.

(music ends)

END PART I