Eagle Clawed: Why Operation Desert One Was Undertaken
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On November 4, 1979 the United States Embassy in Iran was stormed by over 3,000 militant Iranian students. The embassy staff at first believed that these students were only wishing to demonstrate and have a “sit-in,” but it was soon apparent that the students wished for something more and the staff of the embassy was taken hostage (Saunders, 1985). Subsequently, 13 of the hostages (most of whom were women and African Americans) were released, leaving 55 hostages. These hostages would be held for 444 days throughout the rest of Jimmy Carter’s term as president. The hostages were not ignored by the United States government for those 444 days. Negotiations, economic sanctions, and even a rescue mission were attempted. This paper discusses the decision to undertake that rescue mission. Why was the decision made? Was the decision made using a cost-benefit analysis, standard routines, or was the final decision made because of bureaucratic infighting and competition between President Carter’s advisers? There are several different decision making models that are used to explain why the decision to go into the desert was made. These models are: the Rational Actor Model, the Organizational Processes Model, and the Bureaucratic Politics Model. Each of these models are individually reviewed, explored, and tested. The question of why the United States made the decision to go into the desert that fateful day in April will be answered.

Works Cited