MEMORANDUM
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

CONFFIDENTIAL
INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR RICHARD V. ALLEN
FROM: RAYMOND TANTER
SUBJECT: Israel's Air Strike on Iraq's Nuclear Facility (U)

June 9, 1981

Dilemma

Two choices with unacceptable consequences are to join in the
effort to isolate Israel or to give full support to Israel. A middle
course of action, however, is to distance the USG from the air strike
while avoiding extreme measures designed to punish Israel.

Avoidance of the Dilemma

A middle option could include (1) a private letter to Prime
Minister Begin from the President strongly criticizing the
raid but empathizing with the dilemma he faced in deciding
whether to launch the attack or not; (2) a private message
to the Iraqi foreign minister from the Secretary of State
distancing the US from the raid but pointing out the need
for Iraq to take part in the peace process; (3) a White
House statement that criticizes Israel's air strike but
balances it with a criticism of Iraq for not making peace
with Israel; (4) no statement that Israel may be in violation
of US laws concerning the use of American equipment for
other than defensive purposes. Carter-like legalisms should
be phased out of a Reagan Administration (if a statement is
necessary, however, it should be a weak one); (5) a threat
to veto any UN resolution that is not balanced between
condemning Israel's strike and Iraq's reluctance to make peace.

The overall theme underlying the middle course is to avoid
having to choose between the two extremes -- isolating Israel
or supporting Israel's actions. Isolation of Israel reduces
its deterrent capacity and thus increases the chance for
Arab violations of the status quo that could lead to war.
Full support for Israel would isolate the USG from the
international community.

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Review June 9, 1987
cc: Bailey, Feith, Kemp, Schweitzer

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