

June 9, 1981

**Memorandum for Richard V. Allen from Raymond
Tanter, 'Israel's Air Strike on Iraq's Nuclear Facility'**

Citation:

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Summary:

The NSC's Raymond Tanter recommended a "middle course of action," one which would distance Washington from the strike "while avoiding extreme measures designed to punish Israel."

Original Language:

English

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INFORMATION

June 9, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR RICHARD V. ALLEN

FROM: RAYMOND TANTER *RT*

SUBJECT: Israel's Air Strike on Iraq's Nuclear Facility (U)

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. ~~(e)~~

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. ~~(e)~~

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. ~~(e)~~

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Review June 9, 1987

cc: Bailey, Feith, Kemp, Schweitzer

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BY *amf*, NARA, DATE 2/28/05

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