

104.1.03

EMBASSY OF ISRAEL
WASHINGTON, D.C.

שגרירות ישראל
ושינגטון

A0/375

8 June 1981

Dear Mr. President,

I have been asked by Prime Minister Begin to transmit to
you the following message:

"Dear Mr. President,

I am taking the liberty of attaching to this letter the
text of the official communique issued this afternoon by
the Government of Israel. It is relatively brief but it
explains much.

I have to admit to you, Mr. President, that for more than
two years I have lived with this nightmare. Time and again
I asked myself - What shall we do? Wherever I went and
came across children and they, encircling me and asking
their cheeky questions like, "When are you going to change
your car? It consumes too much gasoline." - a sharp pang
of anxiety went through me. What will happen to these
children, I constantly asked myself; Now, they are six
and seven years old. When they will be ten and eleven
years old a cruel and bloodthirsty enemy, who participated
in every war against Israel but never even joined in
signing a ceasefire with Israel - such an enemy will have
the means to use atomic bombs against these children.

We cannot forget that a million-and-a-half Jewish children
were poisoned by a gas called Cyclon B. Should now, in
our time, a further million happy, smiling, beloved

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children be poisoned to death by radioactivity? Poison is poison and mass destruction is mass destruction. Hence, did I shudder and suffered sleepless nights.

We made the decision to act several months ago but we postponed carrying it out for various reasons. We took into consideration the concluding period of the Carter Administration, the so-called interregnum, and then your own inauguration. But now we could not wait any longer, as our communique explains.

There was the almost imminent danger that if we don't act now we shall never again be able to destroy that source of death threatening the lives of our children.

I know, Mr. President, that the United States Government intervened several times with Paris and Rome (the two European capitals which rendered assistance to Saddam Hussein about whom Sadat told me last week in Ophira: "He - Saddam Hussein - is more vicious than Kadaffi.") Now we all know. But even your country's intervention did not change the situation. All the French experts who fled Iraq after the Iranian attack on the reactor eventually returned in force and the pace of construction intensively quickened, therefore, we had no option if we were to remove, in time, the mortal danger which began to loom over our people and children.

We had to act now, without any further delay.

I do trust, Mr. President, that you together with all the great American people, will understand the motives of a people which in one generation lost a third of its sons and was again faced with a spectre of disaster, three Hiroshima type bombs could have destroyed Jerusalem and its vicinity, Tel Aviv and its environs and Haifa and its suburbs. We would have suffered 600,000 casualties which, in American terms, would mean 44 million people.

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We gave an oath to ourselves, Mr. President to prevent
with all the means at our disposal another Holocaust.

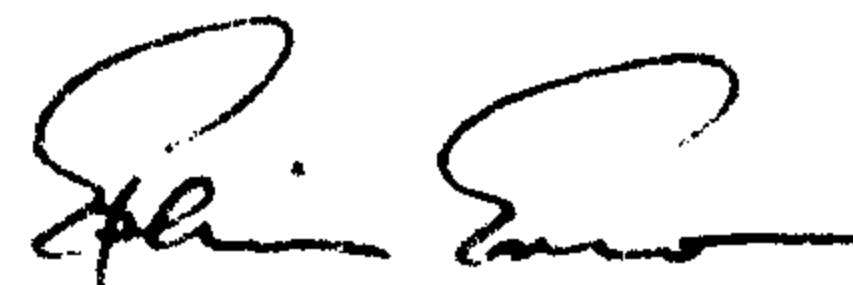
It could and would be another Holocaust and this we did
indeed prevent by the heroism of our pilots, "those
few to whom the many owe so much."

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

(sgd.)
Menachem Begin"

With respectful personal regards,

Sincerely,



Ephraim Evron
Ambassador

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Jerusalem, 8 June 1981

A SPECIAL STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, 8 JUNE 1981

On Sunday, 7 June 1981, the Israel Air Force launched a raid on the atomic reactor "Ossiraq", near Baghdad. Our pilots carried out their mission fully, the reactor was destroyed, all our aircraft returned safely to base.

The Government feels dutybound to explain to enlightened public opinion why it took this decision:

For a long time we have been watching with growing concern the construction of the atomic reactor, "Ossiraq", from sources whose reliability is beyond any doubt. We learned that this reactor, despite its camouflage, is designed to produce atomic bombs. The target for such bombs would be Israel. This was clearly announced by the ruler of Iraq. After the Iranians had inflicted slight damage on the reactor, Saddam Hussein stressed that the Iranians had attacked the target in vain since it was being constructed against Israel alone. The atomic bombs which that reactor was capable of producing, whether from enriched uranium or from plutonium, would be of the Hiroshima size. Thus a mortal danger to the people of Israel progressively arose.

Again, from most reliable sources we learned of two dates when the reactor would be completed and put into operation.

One: The beginning of July 1981.

Two: The beginning of September 1981.

In other words, within a short period of time the Iraqi reactor would have been operational and "hot". Under such circumstances, no government of Israel could contemplate bombing the reactor. Such an attack would have brought about a massive radioactive lethal fallout over the city of Baghdad, and tens of thousands of its innocent residents

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would have been hurt. We would thus have been compelled to passively observe the process of the production of atomic bombs in Iraq, whose ruling tyrant would not hesitate to launch them against Israeli cities, the centers of its population. Therefore, the Government of Israel decided to act without further delay to ensure our people's existence. The planning was exact. The operation was timed for Sunday on the assumption that the 100-150 foreign experts employed at the reactor would be absent on the Christian day of rest. This assumption proved to have been correct. No foreign experts were hurt.

Two European governments, in return for oil, have assisted the Iraqi tyrant in the construction of atomic weapons. We again call upon them to desist from this horrifying, inhuman deed. Under no circumstances will we allow an enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction against our people.

We shall defend the citizens of Israel in time and with all the means at our disposal.