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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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June 15, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

From: Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., Acting

Subject: Political Strategy for Responding to
Israeli Attack

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My colleagues and I will be testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Thursday about the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear facility. The UN Security Council debate also will be continuing, with proposed resolutions emerging at any time.

This memorandum outlines the strategy we propose to follow on the Hill and at the UN. I have also attached some "themes" and questions and answers which you may want to draw on as you discuss this issue in public settings.

Congressional Strategy. In Secretary Haig's June 10 letters to the Congress, he stated that "a substantial violation may have occurred" as a result of the Israeli attack, and that the scheduled delivery of four F-16 aircraft to Israel was being suspended "for the time being." The letters indicated that the suspension would remain in effect "while our discussions with Israel continue" and while Congress considered the matter.

As our press guidance has made clear, we are not required to make a legal determination of whether Israel violated US law. I believe that we should avoid doing so in order to escape from a "no-win" situation.

If we were to make such a legal finding, we could be required to cut off the flow of arms to Israel. Conversely, if we find that no such violation occurred, it would be an endorsement of the Israeli position that the attack was an act of "legitimate self-defense" with obviously damaging consequences for our relations with moderate Arab regimes.

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RDS-3 6/15/87

NLRR M459/1 # 61675
BY LW NARA DATE 9/4/85

Israel/Iraq - Book II (4)

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Executive Secretariat, NSC
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