



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 June 1981

Can this be
(1) or (2)
be released as
information to
the Press?
not

Dear Michael,

Israeli attack on Iraqi Nuclear Plant

You will have seen telegrams Nos 280 and 282. The first reports a claim by Mr Begin that during the strike on the Iraqi plant, the Israelis destroyed a secret nuclear installation forty metres below ground. The second records his 'correction' that the installation was at four metres depth rather than forty.

We have looked carefully into this allegation. To the best of our knowledge there is no secret underground installation. Two explanations are possible:

- (1) The Israelis could be referring to the underground cellar which was inspected by the French Ambassador shortly after the strike. The irradiated fuel has been stored there since the Iranian attack last September;
- (2) Another possibility might be the laboratories which are being constructed by the Italians. The facilities (which include a radio isotope production laboratory) are almost entirely underground. IAEA inspectors would not yet have examined the laboratories since they are not completed and therefore not yet subject to a safeguards agreement. This does not mean however that they are 'secret'. We know furthermore that this facility was not damaged in the attack.

The Ministry of Defence have commented that in any event it is extremely unlikely on technical grounds that the Iraqis would build a facility for the production of nuclear weapons so near to a reactor.

/Even

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Even if the Israelis had convincing information that weapons were to be developed in an underground installation, the right course would have been to consult other governments, particularly those involved in nuclear cooperation with Iraq, and to seek to deal with the problem by diplomatic methods through the safeguards procedure, rather than to launch a unilateral attack.

Yours ever,

F N Richards

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing St

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FM TEL AVIV 120730Z JUN 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 280 OF 12 JUNE

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK BAGHDAD PARIS
PRIORITY ROME BONN UKDEL NATO AMMAN DAMASCUS CAIRO JEDDA

MYTEL NO 277: ISRAEL/IRAQ

- 4
1. BEGIN YESTERDAY CLAIMED THAT DURING THE STRIKE ON THE IRAQI REACTOR ON 7 JUNE THE ISRAELIS ALSO DESTROYED A SECRET NUCLEAR INSTALLATION FORTY METRES BELOW GROUND. HE CLAIMED THAT THE UNDERGROUND FACILITY WAS BEING PREPARED FOR THE PRODUCTION OF ATOMIC WEAPONS. THE IAEA INSPECTORS HAD FAILED TO FIND IT. BEGIN ALSO ACCUSED WEINBERGER OF BEING "THE CULPRIT WHO ATTEMPTED TO DENY ISRAEL ALL MILITARY AID" FOLLOWING THE ISRAELI STRIKE. "IN THIS HE WAS AIDED BY THE ISRAELI LABOUR PARTY AND ESPECIALLY PERES WHILE HAIG PROVED HIMSELF A TRUE FRIEND."
 2. WEINBERGER'S REPORTED COMMENT THAT BEGIN WAS PROCEEDING ON ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTIONS IS ALL BEGIN NEEDS FOR ELECTORAL PURPOSES HERE.
 3. THE LATEST POLL, TAKEN JUST BEFORE THE 7 JUNE STRIKE, SHOWS A FURTHER WIDENING OF LIKUD OVER LABOUR (46 TO LABOUR'S 40). IF BEGIN CAN HOLD A LEAD OF THIS KIND HE IS ASSURED OF FORMING ISRAEL'S NEXT GOVERNMENT.

ROBINSON

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PS/MR HURD

PS/PUS

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SIR J GRAHAM

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MR J MOBERLY

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FM TEL AVIV 121150Z JUN 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 282 OF 12 JUNE

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK BAGHDAD PARIS

PRIORITY ROME BONN UKDEL NATO AMMAN DAMASCUS CAIRO JEDDA

MY TEL NO 280: ISRAEL/IRAQ

1. MASSEY, THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT WHO INTERVIEWED BEGIN LAST NIGHT, TELLS US THAT BEGIN JUST (1100Z) TELEPHONED HIM TO SAY THAT, HAVING LOOKED AT THE RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AGAIN THIS MORNING, HE HAD BEEN WRONG TO CLAIM THAT THE SECRET NUCLEAR INSTALLATION DESTROYED BY THE ISRAELIS ON 7 JUNE HAD BEEN FORTY METRES BELOW GROUND. THE CORRECT FIGURE WAS 4 METRES. BUT HE STOOD BY HIS OTHER REMARKS.

ROBINSON

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