

February 19, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT - Evening Report

1. Zurich El Al Incident - The Department has taken a number of diplomatic steps in connection with the attack on the El Al aircraft in Zurich on Tuesday. We issued a statement late yesterday deploring the incident shortly after we contacted the Israeli Embassy and informed it that we wished to stay in closest contact on developments.

This morning Joe Sisco discussed the incident with Israeli Minister Argov in the absence of Ambassador Rabin. Joe urged them to pursue steps which would keep the focus of world opinion in Israel's favor on this critical problem and not to negate world reaction by taking some offensive commando-type retaliatory action. As a means of assisting in keeping the proper focus on the El Al incident, he informed Argov that we were transmitting a letter of protest regarding the incident to the UN Security Council for the information of the members. Argov also was informed that we were encouraging both the British and the French to do the same or at least issue public statements condemning the latest attacks. We were also asking our Ambassadors to contact a number of friendly governments who have an interest in freedom of international air traffic to come out publicly on this matter.

We have also taken steps today to place the general problem of freedom of air traffic on the agenda of the ICAO Council which will consider this on a priority basis at Monday's meeting. We instructed our Ambassadors in various Arab capitals to take up the matter with their respective governments to see whether any steps could be taken by them to restrain such commando raids. Today Ambassador Barbour counselled restraint on the Israeli Government. Finally, we issued a further press statement at noon revealing the steps that had been taken.

2. Congressional Interest in Tunaboat Incident - Senator Murphy told me yesterday that he thought the Administration should make clear to the Peruvians that we were determined to end seizures in international waters and suggested that someone experienced in Latin American affairs be sent to Lima. I said we are considering such a proposal but that we wanted to ascertain whether the Peruvians would be willing to receive an emissary. Congressman Wilson recommended a tough attitude and agreed that serious consideration be given to recalling a destroyer on loan to Peru. The two visitors did not press their public line that destroyer escorts should be sent to protect the tunaboats.


Elliot L. Richardson