



Can Israel Still Count on the 'Begin Doctrine' to Stop Nuclear Threats?

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Last month, the Israeli military confirmed that it conducted the 2007 air strike that destroyed the Syrian nuclear facility in the Deir al-Zour region. While the international community had long known that Israel was behind the attack, this much-delayed confirmation was a timely reminder of Israel's impressive intelligence and air capabilities. Nevertheless, this renewed focus on the attack may have also exposed the limitations of Israel's ability to replicate its success.

Israel's action in Syria was not unprecedented, but rather mirrored the June 1981 air strike against the Osirak nuclear facility outside Baghdad, Iraq. Following the destruction of the Iraqi facility, Menachem Begin, then prime minister, [stated that](#) if Iraq could have developed nuclear weapons, "another Holocaust would have happened," but instead the country decided to "defend our people with all the means at our disposal" and "not allow any enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction turned against us." Israel's strategy of preemptively striking the nuclear facilities of its regional enemies subsequently became known as the "Begin Doctrine."

Despite the past successes of the Begin Doctrine in Syria and Iraq, it remains unclear whether Israel will be able to replicate these attacks in the future. At this important juncture in history, as President Donald Trump contemplates withdrawing from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and Israel considers its options against Iran, we believe several factors will severely limit Israel's ability to continue fulfilling the Begin Doctrine.

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