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Raid on the Sun: Inside Israel's Secret Campaign that Denied Saddam the Bomb

Rodger Claire

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The first authorized inside account of one of the most daring—and successful—military operations in recent history

From the earliest days of his dictatorship, Saddam Hussein had vowed to destroy Israel. So when France sold Iraq a top-of-the-line nuclear reactor in 1975, the Israelis were justifiably concerned—especially when they discovered that Iraqi scientists had already formulated a secret program to extract weapons-grade plutonium from the reactor, a first critical step in creating an atomic bomb. The reactor formed the heart of a huge nuclear plant situated twelve miles from Baghdad, 1,100 kilometers from Tel Aviv. By 1981, the reactor was on the verge of becoming “hot,” and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin knew he would have to confront its deadly potential. He turned to Israeli Air Force commander General David Ivry to secretly plan a daring surgical strike on the reactor—a never-before-contemplated mission that would prove to be one of the most remarkable military operations of all time.

Written with the full and exclusive cooperation of the Israeli Air Force high command, General Ivry (ret.), and all of the eight mission pilots (including Ilan Ramon, who become Israel’s first astronaut and perished tragically in the shuttle Columbia disaster), *Raid on the Sun* tells the extraordinary story of how Israel plotted the unthinkable: defying its U.S. and European allies to eliminate Iraq’s nuclear threat. In the tradition of *Black Hawk Down*, journalist Rodger Claire re-creates a gripping tale of personal sacrifice and survival, of young pilots who trained in the United States on the then-new, radically sophisticated F-16 fighter bombers, then faced a nearly insurmountable challenge: how to fly the 1,000-plus-kilometer mission to Baghdad and back on one tank of fuel. He recounts Israeli intelligence’s incredible “black ops” to sabotage construction on the French reactor and eliminate Iraqi nuclear scientists, and he gives the reader a pilot’s-eye view of the action on June 7, 1981, when the planes roared off a runway on the Sinai Peninsula for the first successful destruction of a nuclear reactor in history.

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