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USS Liberty Vets Demand End to Coverup!

by William Hughes
(Friday June 10 2005)

"Thirty eight years have passed since Israel attacked the USS Liberty on June 8, 1967. The Israelis said it was all "an accident." This is same excuse they used, in 2003, when they killed Rachel Corrie! Thirty-four Americans died on the Liberty and 173 more were wounded. The Liberty's Vets believe the assault was deliberate and have charged Israel with committing War Crimes."

"Justice delayed, is Justice denied."

-- William Gladstone

Washington, D.C. - On June 10, 2005, veterans of the USS Liberty, [1] and their supporters, gathered on the 11th floor of a downtown hotel, not far from the White House. Thirty eight years have passed since the Liberty was subjected to what credible, eyewitness survivors believe was a premeditative and brutal attack by the military forces of Zionist Israel. The Israelis have always whined that it was all "just an accident." [2] It's clear to me, and many others, that justice has not been done in this case. The primary purpose of today's confab, sponsored by the USS Liberty Veteran's Association, was to announce the filing of its brief with the Secretary of the Army. It charges Zionist Israel with War Crimes! [3]

The Liberty Vet's brief is entitled, "A Report: War Crimes Committed Against U.S. Military Personnel, June 8, 1967." It is a cogent, detailed, factually-based and scathing indictment of deliberate wrong doings by Israel, on June 8, 1967, when its air and naval forces attacked, without provocation, the USS Liberty, (AGTR-5), an Intelligence ship, in international waters. That vicious crime consisted of repeated Israeli assaults on the vessel by Mirage fighter bombers, Dassault Mystere III jets, and torpedo boats. The Israelis used missiles, rockets and napalm to slaughter 34 of the Liberty crew members, wounding 173 others. The monstrosity of the evil deeds of the Israelis also included the machine gunning of the Liberty's life rafts. [4] The Liberty Vets' "Report" rightly describes the egregious conduct of the Israelis as being in violation of the terms of "the Geneva Convention" and as demonstrating a gross and "wanton disregard for human life." [3]

A cook on the Liberty, who was wounded, Seaman Warren D. Heaney, told me before the conference, "We need some closure to this event. It has been going on much too long. It's wearing us down. The families of these men need the real reasons told why their loved ones had to die." Maurice B. "Moe" Shafer, a Chief Petty Officer on the vessel, who spoke at the conference, said, "It's long past the time to conduct this long overdue investigation...It is time to uncover - the coverup - and let's get to the truth!"

Incidentally, I couldn't help but notice the absence of any members of the U.S. Congress and/or officials from the Bush-Cheney administration at today's event. This was in marked contrast to the annual conference of the powerful pro-Israeli lobbying juggernaut - the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). [5] It was also held in D.C., from May 23-25, 2005, at the Washington Convention

Center. At that session, which I also covered, many of the leading members of the Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, were in attendance and/or on the agenda as speakers, as was the Secretary of State, Condi Rice. Meanwhile, two ex-AIPAC officials are presently suspected of spying on the U.S., a la Jonathan Pollard, for the Right Wing Israeli regime. [6] Isn't there something wrong with this picture?

According to Liberty Seaman, Ronald F. Grantski, another speaker, the Israelis had the ship under aerial "surveillance the night before - 15 times minimum...and the next day, too! How can they say it was an accident?...Their story is bull!" Senior Petty Officer Joe Lentini, told the audience, "Israel can't have it both ways. It can't claim it misread our speed at 25 knots three times because of poor equipment... and then identify us as an Egyptian ship that couldn't do 5 knots! They can't say they were responding to shelling from the sea and turn around and identify us as an Egyptian horse carrier (an old freighter) that had no weapons! None of it makes sense."

The well-documented legal brief of the Liberty Vets also claims, "It has established, 'prima facie,' the commission of war crimes by the state of Israel against U.S. military personnel and civilians..." (Prima facie is a legal term. It is defined by Black's Dictionary as meaning that facts are presumed to be true, "unless disproved by some other evidence to the contrary.")

>The brief also asserts that, "The failure of the United States government to undertake a complete investigation of the Israeli attack on the USS Liberty, has rendered a grievous harm to the surviving victims, as well as to the families of all crew members." All of the above, it believes has resulted, in a "stain upon the honor of the United States of America..." [3]

Some commentators on the Liberty affair have argued that the Israelis were trying to murder all 294 Americans on board the vessel, in their terror-filled 75 minute attack, sink the vessel and make it look like the Egyptians had done it! [7] On the other side of the question, Ahron Jay Cristol, an arch-apologist for the Israelis, insisted in his book, "The Liberty Incident," which reads like a made-In-Tel-Aviv press release, that it was just "a tragic mistake...a series of blunders." A self-described "amateur historian," Cristol also went out of his way to smear those seeking justice for the Liberty in a babbling talk he gave last year at the NSA Museum, at Ft. Meade, MD. He mocked them by sarcastically claiming, "Americans love conspiracy!" In an obvious Freudian slip, he also added, "Unfortunately, it's a free country!" [8]

On June 8, 2005, the Liberty Vets also had taken out a full page ad in the Washington Times, demanding that President George W. Bush speak out on the Liberty tragedy. The ad's title read, "President Bush - We Can't Hear You ? Your Silence has been Deafening!"

The gathering's most compelling comments were made by Seaman Richard "Larry" Weaver of the Liberty. He was very badly wounded by the Israeli attack, and he is still in constant pain and suffering and has recurring nightmares of that horrific day. As a result of his serious injuries, he has been through 29 major surgeries. Weaver said that he was "on watch" the night before the Israeli attack and that one of the Israeli planes flew so close to the Liberty that he could actually see on its starboard side, "the Star of David!" Weaver said that despite

his medical condition, while he was later recovering back home at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, he was personally threatened by a Three Star Admiral, Isaac C. Kidd, who is now deceased. The admiral warned Weaver, that if he ever told the truth about what happened to the Liberty, that he would be put "in prison," and that the Navy would "lose the key!"

Weaver also raised, too, some very profound thoughts: "If someone deserts and leaves the battlefield, then, [they] are shot! Well, the USS Liberty was deserted by our own government...Every president has turned [his back] on us... I make a challenge to President Bush, that he step forward and right this wrong. And, if he doesn't, then how can he expect our youth to stand up and raise their [hands] to serve this country? In the back of their minds," Weaver concluded, "when they find out about this stuff and knowing that the very same thing can happen to them - that their government - can turn their back on them!"

Finally, if the American people don't rally today around the veterans of the USS Liberty in their pursuit of justice, and light a fire, too, under that Israeli-challenged and AIPAC-mesmerized Congress, to take positive action in this matter, then that awful "stain on the honor of the U.S.A," referred to in the brief of the Liberty Vets, may never be removed!

Notes:

[1]. <http://www.usliberty.org/>.

[2]. This is the same lame excuse that Zionist officials used to explain their unjustified killing of the American-born peace and justice activist, Rachel Corrie, age 22. The Israelis ran her over, not once, but twice, with a huge bulldozer. She was protesting the immoral demolition of Palestinian homes by the Israeli Occupation Forces. See, <http://www.rachelcorrie.org/>, for accounts of the unlawful slaying of the resident of Olympia, Washington.

[3]. <http://www.usliberty.org/report/report.pdf>.

[4]. James M. Ennes, Jr.'s riveting book, "Assault on the Liberty," and James Bamford's outstanding tome, "Body of Secrets." One of the Liberty's 34 innocent victims was William B. Allenbaugh, Sr., age 23, USN Petty Officer. He was from my home town of Baltimore, MD. Allenbaugh was also a graduate of my alma mater, Calvert Hall High School.

[5]. <http://www.aipac.org/AIPAC-pc2005.html>.

[6]. <http://antiwar.com/justin/?articleid=3469>.

[7]. Check out, "Operation Cyanide," by Peter Hounam; numerous articles in the authoritative magazine, "Washington Report on Middle East Affairs," at: <http://www.wrmea.com/>; and the video, "USS Liberty Dead in the Water."

[8]. This writer made an audio recording, on Jan. 19, 2004, of the disjointed remarks of Ahron Jay Cristol, at the National Security Agency's Museum, located at Ft. Meade, MD. It's entitled, "Cristol Rambles at NSA Museum" - <http://www.usliberty.org/>. My audio transcription was later converted to the MP3 format, courtesy of John Gidusko.

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