



War Without End

The global war against terror from a British perspective

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Letter to SD Union Trib: Ward Boston is Right about Liberty



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Author

Message

Alpha
Lieutenant
☆☆☆☆☆

Posted: Sat Feb 21, 2004 8:47 pm Post subject: Letter to SD Union Trib:
Ward Boston is Right about Liberty



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/uniontrib/fri/opinion/news_mz1e20lets1.html

Ward Boston is right about Liberty attack

Regarding "Ex-officer alleges cover-up in probe of spy ship attack,"
News, Feb. 17:

You can call it an "allegation" if you want, but it certainly happened exactly as retired Navy Capt. Ward Boston said it did. I can assure you that Israel not only attacked the U.S. Naval Security Group ship and killed American sailors, but attacked again and again and again in a failed effort to sink the vessel, which was clearly flying the American flag. Why? To cover up an ongoing massacre of Egyptian soldiers upon which the ship was eavesdropping. It was a futile effort and useless slaughter of American lives on the Israelis' part because everything was also being recorded by a U.S. Air Force spy plane flying above. Commander William L. McGonagle, the ship's captain, was later awarded the Medal of Honor, the only recipient in history to receive it in a private, secret ceremony. To play the apologist and claim that it was a "mistake," as Judge Jay Cristol does in "The Liberty Incident," is a disgrace to the memory of the many American sailors who died that day. As usual, given enough time, the truth will normally out.

HAROLD TRUMAN
Pacific Beach

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Alpha
Lieutenant
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Posted: Wed Feb 25, 2004 6:29 am Post subject: EX-OFFICER ALLEGES
COVER-UP IN PROBE OF SPY SHIP ATTACK



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

From the web site at:

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20040217-9999-1n17liberty.html>

EX-OFFICER ALLEGES COVER-UP IN PROBE OF SPY SHIP ATTACK

By James W. Crawley

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

February 17, 2004

Ward Boston is an unassuming octogenarian who resides in a gated community on Coronado's Silver Strand.

A retired Navy captain, he hardly attracts attention in a town full of active-duty and retired sailors.

Yet Boston is in the maelstrom of a nearly 37-year-old controversy surrounding Israel's deadly attack on the Navy's spy ship Liberty during the Six-Day War with Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The June 1967 attack killed 34 Americans and wounded 171.

Last October, Boston broke decades of silence and declared that the Navy admiral who investigated the incident had been ordered by President Lyndon Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to conclude it was a case of mistaken identity, despite evidence to the contrary.

As the chief counsel for the Navy's court of inquiry, Boston had an insider's view.

"I didn't speak up earlier because I was told not to," Boston said in an interview.

His revelation, repeated last month before a State Department conference about the Six-Day War, has rekindled a smoldering debate over how it happened and whether the United States and Israel covered up the truth.

Anti-Israel factions portray Boston's words – true to his legal background, memorialized in two affidavits but rarely spoken to an audience larger than one person – as proof of Israel's guilt.

Israel's supporters, including a federal bankruptcy judge who researched the attack and wrote a book on it, say Boston is lying. Some pin an anti-Semitic badge on his lapel.

On Web pages and through e-mail, an electronic brawl is raging over Boston's disclosures among his admirers and detractors.

But, for the men who survived the attack, Boston's comments endorse views smelted in cordite, blood and smoke.

"We feel we've been vindicated," said James Ennes, the Liberty's officer of the deck the day of the attack, which left him severely wounded.

"We've been saying for 37 years that the court of inquiry was a fraud, that it was corrupted, that it ignored evidence and made

findings not supported by the evidence," said Ennes, whose book about the incident claims it was a deliberate Israeli attack.

Boston's cover-up allegation is "enormously significant," said author James Bamford, who has written several books about the super-secret National Security Agency, which analyzed radio intercepts from Liberty and other U.S. surveillance ships.

"It's equivalent to former Supreme Court (Chief) Justice Earl Warren coming out and saying 'the Warren Commission report on (the) Kennedy (assassination) – everything we said was not what we believed, but we were pressured to say it,' " Bamford said.

"It puts an enormous shadow over everything that was in the (Navy) report," he said.

Even with Boston's affidavits and some newly released documents presented at the State Department conference, no consensus was reached on whether the attack was deliberate, accidental or the result of negligence.

The Liberty was a Navy spy ship, plain and simple.

Like its ill-fated sister vessel Pueblo, which was captured by North Korea six months later, the Liberty was festooned with antennas and its cargo holds were converted into top-secret locked compartments lined with receivers where petty officers eavesdropped on other nations' militaries.

During the Six-Day War, the Liberty loitered off the Sinai Peninsula, listening to Israel's lightning victory over Egypt.

On the afternoon of June 8, 1967, Israeli jets strafed the ship. Hours later, Israeli torpedo boats attacked. By the evening, 34 U.S. sailors were dead and 171 injured.

Israel said the attack was a terrible mistake caused by the misidentification of the Liberty as an Egyptian vessel. Investigations followed, including the Navy's court of inquiry.

That's when Ward Boston's involvement began.

If Hollywood had discovered Boston, he could have been the real-life prototype for Cmdr. Harmon Rabb, one of the leads on the television show "JAG."

In the Pacific during World War II, Boston flew harrowing photo-reconnaissance missions over Tokyo and Iwo Jima in Navy Hellcat fighters, sometimes making three passes over a single target – once to take pre-bombing pictures, then joining other planes in attacking the target and, finally, a post-attack pass to photograph the damage.

After the war, Boston went to law school, passed the bar and entered private practice. Meanwhile, he continued to fly Navy fighters as a reservist, including its first jet, the FH-1 Phantom.

In the late 1940s, he joined the FBI and was assigned to field offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles. During the Korean War, he rejoined the Navy, this time as a JAG officer.

By June 1967, Boston was legal officer for then-Rear Adm. Isaac Kidd Jr. when the flag officer was assigned to head the hastily convened inquiry into the Liberty attack.

Unable to interview hospitalized sailors and Israeli military and civilian officials, the investigative panel was given just a week to examine the battered ship, interview survivors and collect radio intercepts and other information.

Boston said it was obvious then who was responsible.

"There's no way in the world that it was an accident," Boston said.

In his affidavits and a recent interview, Boston recounted how he and Kidd discussed their conclusions about the survivors' testimony.

"(Kidd) referred to the Israelis as 'murderous bastards,' " Boston said.

After Kidd delivered the panel's report to Washington officials, Boston said the admiral told him, "they aren't interested in the facts or what happened. It's a political issue. They want to cover it up." Then Kidd admonished Boston to keep silent.

Boston said Kidd told him privately that orders came from Johnson and McNamara to find the incident was a mistake and not a deliberate act.

There is no documentation to support Boston's account.

Kidd died in 1999 at 79 after a career topped by command of the Atlantic Fleet. He never spoke of a cover-up.

The late '60s was the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviets were backing the Arab nations; the United States was allied with Israel. U.S. troops were fully engaged in Vietnam and the United States was fearful of growing Soviet influence, especially in the oil-rich Mideast.

Those who claim the attack was no accident argue that Israel wanted to stop the Liberty from snooping on its military during the war.

Boston kept quiet too, until the 2002 publication of "The

Liberty Incident," by Judge Jay Cristol, provoked him.

Cristol's book, based on more than 10 years of research and hundreds of interviews and the collection of thousands of documents, argued that Israeli pilots, sailors and top military officials, in the heat of combat and the fog of war, were unaware the Liberty was a U.S. ship, mistaking it for an Egyptian vessel.

The two men spoke twice during the 1990s while Cristol researched his book, but Boston said recently that he only discussed his career and did not reveal details of the inquiry.

"It is Cristol's insidious attempt to whitewash the facts that has pushed me to speak out," Boston said in a Jan. 8 affidavit, read by Bamford at the State Department conference last month. Boston did not attend the conference.

Boston's affidavit was passed to Bamford by a friend who believes that Israel is responsible for the attack on the Liberty.

The judge, during a recent telephone interview, discounted Boston's contention that Johnson and McNamara covered up Israel complicity.

"I think those (accusations) are kind of nonsense," Cristol said.

Cristol – also a former Navy pilot and JAG officer – said Boston's comments show that he either lied in 1967 by knowingly filing a false report or that his memory has changed with age.

Referring to Cristol, Boston said, "I'm not going to get into a spitting contest with a skunk."

He also rejected suggestions that he is anti-Semitic, while acknowledging some sympathy for the plight of Palestinian refugees.

As he splits his day between local organizations and daily visits to the gym to loosen up arthritic joints, Boston remains largely oblivious to the electronic cacophony of e-mail and Internet chat that makes him out to be either a patriot or a patsy for anti-Israel factions.

That's because Boston doesn't have a computer. Friends print out and pass along Internet postings mentioning him or his statements.

"I'm a dinosaur," he said. "I use a pencil with an eraser and a typewriter."

o__ I'll tell you the truth about the USS LIBERTY, visit
.>/)
(_) \(_) <http://home.cfl.rr.com/gidusko/liberty/>

(updated frequently)

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Alpha
Lieutenant
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Posted: Wed Mar 03, 2004 8:06 am Post subject: Captain Boston's Declaration Appears Here



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

<http://www.rense.com/Datapages/usslib.htm>

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Alpha
Lieutenant
☆☆☆☆☆

Posted: Wed Mar 03, 2004 8:42 am Post subject: [Fwd: LIBERTY SURVIVORS POST \$10,000 REWARD!!!]



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

Subj: [Fwd: LIBERTY SURVIVORS POST \$10,000 REWARD!!!]
Date: 3/2/04 10:44:59 PM Pacific Standard Time
From: jblankfort@earthlink.net

On June 8, 1967, the Israeli air force and navy attacked the lightly armed USS Liberty, an intelligence gathering ship, sitting off the Sinai coast, killing 34 US sailors and wounding 171. Beginning with Sec of State Robert MacNamara's (the "hero" of the Fog of War) decision to call back the US jets that were sent to defend the Liberty, the US government, lock, stock and barrel, has suppressed this story and has never held a full investigation of the attack. That attack, in which Israel was able to get clean away with killing and wounding American servicemen without so much as a slap on the wrist, is probably the defining event in US-Israel relations. In the past year, several Israel apologists have tried to paint a picture far from the truth on the incident in response to the increased activity among Liberty veterans in getting their story out and an investigation launched. One such apologist is AJ Cristol which explains the offer below sent by James Ennes, a former officer and survivor of the Liberty attack.

Jeff B
"Date: Mon, 01 Mar 2004 10:33:53 -0800

> From: Jim Ennes <jim@ennes.com>
> Subject: [LVA-Private] challenge
> To: ANYBODY!!!
>
> Challenge issued:
>
> www.usliberty.org/challenge.htm
>

> The Liberty Veterans Association offers a \$10,000 reward for
> anyone who can establish the truth of A. Jay Cristol's claim:
>
> "After ten official US investigations (including five con-
> gressional investigations), there was never any evidence that
> the attack was made with knowledge that the target was a US
> ship."
>
> The LVA has disputed the truth of this statement for years.
> After giving the matter some consideration, the LVA has con-
> cluded that the offer of a reward to anyone who can establish
> this statement as true (including Mr. Cristol), is the best
> means of proving that it is false.
>
> Today is day one of the challenge. We will continue the count,
> day by day.
>
> _____
>
> o__ I'll tell you the truth about the USS LIBERTY, visit
> _.>/)_
> () \ () <http://home.cfl.rr.com/gidusko/liberty/>

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Alpha
Lieutenant
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Posted: Sat Mar 06, 2004 7:36 am Post subject: Israeli Attack on U.S. Navy Ship Led to Cover-Up



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

Israeli Attack on U.S. Navy Ship Led to Cover-Up

http://www.libertyforum.org/showflat.php?Cat=&Board=news_crime&Number=1342978&page=0&view=collapsed&sb=5&o=21&part=all

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Alpha
Lieutenant
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Posted: Tue Mar 30, 2004 9:15 pm Post subject: Another SD Union article on USS Liberty -



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

Subj: SD Union article on USS Liberty -
Date: 3/30/04 11:35:48 AM Pacific Standard Time
From: JGidusko@cfl.rr.com

From the website at:
http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040328/news_mz1e29libert.html

ATTACK ON THE LIBERTY

Lifting the 'fog of war'
By David C. Walsh

The damaged U.S. intelligence ship Liberty arrived in Malta. An Israeli torpedo blew a 40-foot hole in the Liberty's hull. U.S.

Navy Naval Historical Center photo collection

March 28, 2004

The bare bones are these: The intelligence ship Liberty, AGTR-5, on June 8, 1967 was describing a slow, dogleg pattern a little less than 13 miles off the Egyptian coast in the Eastern Mediterranean. Without warning, rocket-firing Israel jets, followed after an interval by torpedo boats, pummeled her to near-death; 821 separate holes would later be counted in the scorched superstructure.

An Israeli torpedo blew a 40-foot hole in the Liberty's hull, devastating the cryptological spaces below decks and killing 25 U.S. National Security Agency technicians. The spy ship's defensive armament comprised a mere four machine-guns. These had been judged adequate, insofar as she was a noncombatant in international waters. The Israeli attack continued for an hour and a quarter. When the smoke cleared, 34 Americans were dead, another 172 lay wounded.

The story of the intelligence ship in a sense resembles the Liberty herself: both refuse to go down. The heartbreaking saga is kept afloat by mutually antagonistic partisans – I dub them the "deliberates" and the "accidentalists."

Periodically, the dispute flares anew, each side throwing punch and counterpunch. Some strikes are errant, or glancing, or below the belt; others, solid hammer blows the recovery from which seems impossible.

Occasionally, as now, the action is in synch. In one "corner" are a retired Navy JAG captain-cum-judge and the government of Israel; in the other, Liberty survivors, former leaders of the highly secret National Security Agency and other spooky types. The judge, A. Jay Cristol, has written a controversial book, "The Liberty Incident." It alleges that the furious attack on the U.S. Navy ship (tasked by the NSA and the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs of Staff) was what Israel since 1967 has claimed: a "friendly-fire" accident, the sort that bedevils every war.

For their part, Liberty supporters assert that the ex-Navy lawyer is merely the latest, albeit most effective, in a long series of apologists for Israel. He is helping Israel engage in a decades-long campaign of disinformation and deceit, they maintain. Some harbor their own "conspiratorial" suspicions, i.e., that Israel paid for the many research trips Cristol made to the Jewish state over many years. Regardless, they say the present round of rhetorical combat has exposed their nemesis as highly selective in the use of records, disingenuous and desperate. "He's on the ropes!" exclaims one. Perhaps. But with skeins of the story ever spreading, knotty issues left to be untied and core truths waiting to be teased out, neither side can declare "case closed."

The sad slugfest continues.

In June 2003, I published an investigative article in the United States Naval Institute's Proceedings magazine; one that drew on some unusually well-informed people. These weren't Israelis (Judge Cristol supplies those), but American intelligence leaders. They were addressing the tragedy for the first time; partly, some said, because of the Cristol book. Also included were interviews and conversations with the Liberty's surviving cryptanalysts and other specialists.

In total, they pointed the way toward an unsettling conclusion: The Cristol/Israeli explanation of "accidental attack in the fog of war" may have grown so threadbare as to be virtually unsustainable.

PROOF

Two former NSA directors – Adm. Bobby Ray Inman, Gen. William Odom – and two ex-deputy directors – Gen. John Morrison and Oliver Kirby – told me that there has never been any question at the agency but that Israel's attack on the Liberty was deliberate.

Kirby, for example, is "absolutely certain" about this. A storied career NSA official, Kirby had founded the ELINT program under which the Liberty and her several sister ships operated. "It was my baby," he said in an interview last year.

Pressed about what made him sure the Israelis wanted to destroy the Liberty, Kirby said it was because he'd personally analyzed the SIGINT intercepts of their communications gleaned from various American intelligence sources. These disclosed: 1) that the on-scene attackers that June 8 correctly identified the ship, and 2) that regardless, Israeli commanders at an as-yet-unknown level instructed them to annihilate the Liberty.

Why had Kirby not gone public with this astonishing disclosure?

"No one had asked me the right questions before," he told me.

In an interview Feb. 24, 2003, retired Air Force Major General John Morrison, the agency's then second in command (and Kirby's successor), said he had been informed at the time of Kirby's findings and endorsed them. William Odom, former NSA Director and retired Army lieutenant general, said on March 3, 2003 that on the strength of such data, the attack's deliberateness "just wasn't a disputed issue" within the agency.

On March 5, 2003, retired Navy Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, NSA director from 1977-81, said he "flatly rejected" the Cristol/Israeli thesis. "It is just exceedingly difficult to believe that [the Liberty] was not correctly identified." Inman said his conclusions were based on his talks with NSA senior officials who had direct knowledge at the time. All four officials said they were unaware of any agency official at any time who dissented from the "deliberate," conclusion, based on

the intelligence. These men's comments undergird those recorded by other writers over at least two decades.

In fact, the number of intelligence professionals who rejects the accidental, or related "mistaken identity" explanation is growing. In 2002, the late Richard Helms, then director of Central Intelligence, finally added his authoritative voice to the "deliberates," telling the Navy Times the attack was "no mistake." Previously, the then NSA director, Gen. Marshall Carter, and his deputy, Louis Tordella, said likewise.

USS Liberty Veterans Association historian James Ennes (author of the 1980 book "Assault on the Liberty," now updated) says more apostates to the official Israeli – and United States – position are being heard from in sworn affidavits. For example, two ex-USAF Intelligence personnel state that the damning electronic signals they monitored had been captured by an NSA-operated EC-130 flying near the attack, translated and disseminated worldwide. Hundreds of technicians and intelligence specialists around the world had access to these intercepts. At least a few are now coming forward to discuss what they saw.

Here it's worth reiterating something key to this dimension of the accidentalists vs. deliberates contest. The intercepts referenced by Odom, Helms, Kirby et al (whose existence the NSA officially denies) were real-time intelligence gleaned as the attack commenced. By contrast, the NSA-held material Cristol succeeded in declassifying, which he insists validates his view, appear limited to after-action reports by Israeli helicopter pilots. They'd arrived to survey the damage from the attack and played no role in it.

In any case, the disparity between these intelligence officials' revelations and the official, steadfast American government position – "no evidence of deliberateness" – is as enormous as it is remarkable. Obviously, people like Helms (who as director coordinated the entire United States intelligence community) Inman, Morrison, et al were among the world's most knowledgeable. Thus, it seems difficult to understand why during so many years spent probing the Liberty, Cristol apparently caged only one of like rank for book jacket blurbs. And even this source – ex-Naval Intelligence director Rear Admiral Thomas A. Brooks – now contradicts the judge. He observes in the open-source intelligence journal he edits that the case is not closed.

In any event, why the dearth of American intelligence professionals among sources cited by Cristol? Are they to be lumped in with the "conspiracists," pro-Arabs, etc.?

Cristol does not say. (Various questions to him during the preparation of my Proceedings piece went unanswered, on the grounds, he wrote me, that I was biased.)

The explanation is simple, Liberty men believe. They were steered clear of because their judgments would have collided

with the "accidental" thesis.

WHY?

The Liberty story entails an important ancillary question. How did this catastrophe occur and why would Israel – in 1967 much less tightly tethered to the American lifeline than now – commit such an outrage?

Those I interviewed are like others who have spoken to the disaster for the past 36 years: They profess not to know about motive. Speculation here is as rife as it is, at times, sensational.

Was the coordinated attack to prevent Washington from learning of an Israeli massacre of Egyptian prisoners of war on the Sinai coast nearby? (The killings were belatedly reported in 1995). Or, more plausibly, did the Israelis put the eavesdropping Liberty out of commission to conceal Israel's impending attack on Syria to seize the strategic Golan Heights?

Why did Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. David McDonald shout orders to the two carrier commanders to recall jets sent to help the Liberty, which was then still under deadly attack? (This, according to Liberty's deck officer James Ennes, quoting an electronic technician aboard the Liberty who had "patched" McNamara and Martin together with the carrier skippers through the Naval Communications Station at Port Laerty, Morocco).

Was the recall on orders from President Lyndon Johnson? Did LBJ fear political retaliation at home if he punished Israel? I don't know. I can say that McNamara once told me, as he has others in virtually identical language, that "I have no recollection of the Liberty, and therefore can be of no assistance to you." This is a dumbfounding remark, given the former defense chief's ability to recount decades-old conversations verbatim.

Such tangential questions, interesting and provocative as they are, remain for the future to answer. But they pale before the issue of responsibility, what United States intelligence experts at the highest levels say they knew – and now publicly maintain about the attack. The curtain of official silence long enshrouding the Liberty seems to be slowly rising, and the fog of war lifting. This can only be to the good for all concerned; and for history.

HUMAN COSTS

Never before or since, according to survivors, has a Navy vessel come under such concerted "friendless" fire, with officialdom's reaction being anything less than outrage. Calls for punishment in like circumstances do seem invariably quick and clarion. Witness for example Japan's 1937 attack on the United States gunboat Panay, North Korea's seizure of the Navy intelligence

ship Pueblo in 1968 and the terrorist attack on the Navy destroyer Cole in 2000.

This failure by any administration to probe the motive for the tragedy is wrenching for all who experienced the horror of the attack, cryptologic technicians and seamen alike. As Dr. Richard Kiepfer, the ship's overwhelmed physician, has written, "Never before in the history of the United States Navy has a Navy Board of Inquiry ignored the testimony of American military eyewitnesses and taken, on faith, the word of their attackers." A harsh judgment.

Kiepfer was referring to a perfunctory hearing convened barely a week following the attack, memorable to survivors mainly for its frequent rejection of testimony and evidence that tended to implicate Israel in a deliberate attack. Shockingly, the court's chief legal counsel, Capt. Ward Boston, in 2002 told Navy Times the naval court was, in fact, a politicized sham. Its conclusions, he declared, had been preordained to exonerate Israel.

Last month, Boston expanded upon those views in an interview with the Union-Tribune. He told Union-Tribune reporter James Crawley that a judgment of "no evidence of deliberate intent" was ordered from Washington to spare Israel embarrassment. Formerly, Cristol had supposed Boston would support him.

The debate on such things rages still. But the aggrieved victims, their families and next of kin aren't really interested in legal minutiae, foreign lobbies or the intrigues of power politics or geo-strategies. They seek what they've always been, and likely always will be, denied: a public forum with official sponsorship but without back-room meddling; the opportunity to express grievances before fellow citizens, and to demand answers to volatile questions left too long unanswered.

The questions are fundamental. To their own government: Why did you abandon us during the attack and ignore us until now? And to Israel: Why did you kill our friends?

HISTORY'S JUDGMENT

Would it serve for the United States to call Israel to book at this late date, to insist the attackers be surrendered for questioning along with relevant paperwork and evidence; say, the orange life raft an Israeli torpedo boat seized after allegedly machine-gunning it and two others in the water?

At least one senior Navy lawyer has said, yes. In 1986, Lt. Cmdr. Walter Jacobsen, writing in the Naval Law Review, argued the case for reopening the Liberty matter. Jacobsen based his argument partly on his belief that the attack violated international law and that the machine-gunning of life rafts released from the Liberty constituted a war crime. No statute of limitations exists for murder or war crimes.

One probe might examine what the men saw and heard and wrote down in deck and radio intercept logs during and after the attack. That would reveal, they insist, the miscarriage of justice of the hastily convened naval court of inquiry.

The second might go to motive: why Israel attacked this virtually unarmed, clearly unthreatening vessel on the high seas, and, per the Watergate process, ask "what the Johnson administration knew and when it knew it."

This is, few would disagree, a calamity – a major historic controversy with possible toxic ramifications to this day. Does this country owe anything to the surviving crew, their next of kin and the public? Certainly not a public reading of every encrypted message. But also, not the boilerplate and obfuscation that have been trotted out for the past 36 years and that smack so transparently of cover-up. At a time when enormous amounts of intelligence and other government records dating to the 1960s have been declassified and released, Washington ought to come clean about the Liberty, no matter how embarrassing that might prove.

Until that happens, the ghosts of the Liberty's dead will find no peace.

Walsh is a journalist based in Washington, D.C. Last June he published "Friendless Fire?" in the U.S. Naval Institute's Proceedings magazine.

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.>/)
(_) \(_) <http://home.cfl.rr.com/gidusko/liberty/>

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Lieutenant
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📄 Posted: Tue Mar 30, 2004 10:06 pm Post subject: Re: Another SD Union article on USS Liberty -



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

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Subj: SD Union article on USS Liberty -
Date: 3/30/04 11:35:48 AM Pacific Standard Time
From: JGidusko@cfl.rr.com

From the website at:
http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040328/news_mz1e29libert.html

ATTACK ON THE LIBERTY

Lifting the 'fog of war'
By David C. Walsh

The damaged U.S. intelligence ship Liberty arrived in Malta. An Israeli torpedo blew a 40-foot hole in the Liberty's hull. U.S. Navy Naval Historical Center photo collection

March 28, 2004

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Oliver Kirby – told me that there has never been any question at the agency but that Israel's attack on the Liberty was deliberate.

Kirby, for example, is "absolutely certain" about this. A storied career NSA official, Kirby had founded the ELINT program under which the Liberty and her several sister ships operated. "It was my baby," he said in an interview last year.

Pressed about what made him sure the Israelis wanted to destroy the Liberty, Kirby said it was because he'd personally analyzed the SIGINT intercepts of their communications gleaned from various American intelligence sources. These disclosed: 1) that the on-scene attackers that June 8 correctly identified the ship, and 2) that regardless, Israeli commanders at an as-yet-unknown level instructed them to annihilate the Liberty.

Why had Kirby not gone public with this astonishing disclosure?

"No one had asked me the right questions before," he told me.

In an interview Feb. 24, 2003, retired Air Force Major General John Morrison, the agency's then second in command (and Kirby's successor), said he had been informed at the time of Kirby's findings and endorsed them. William Odom, former NSA Director and retired Army lieutenant general, said on March 3, 2003 that on the strength of such data, the attack's deliberateness "just wasn't a disputed issue" within the agency.

On March 5, 2003, retired Navy Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, NSA director from 1977-81, said he "flatly rejected" the Cristol/Israeli thesis. "It is just exceedingly difficult to believe that [the Liberty] was not correctly identified." Inman said his conclusions were based on his talks with NSA senior officials who had direct knowledge at the time. All four officials said they were unaware of any agency official at any time who dissented from the "deliberate," conclusion, based on the intelligence. These men's comments undergird those recorded by other writers over at least two decades.

In fact, the number of intelligence professionals who rejects the accidental, or related "mistaken identity" explanation is growing. In 2002, the late Richard Helms, then director of Central Intelligence, finally added his authoritative voice to the "deliberates," telling the Navy Times the attack was "no mistake." Previously, the then NSA director, Gen. Marshall Carter, and his deputy, Louis Tordella, said likewise.

USS Liberty Veterans Association historian James Ennes (author of the 1980 book "Assault on the Liberty," now updated) says more apostates to the official Israeli – and United States – position are being heard from in sworn affidavits. For example, two ex-USAF Intelligence personnel state that the damning electronic signals they monitored had been captured by an NSA-operated EC-130 flying near the attack, translated and disseminated worldwide. Hundreds of technicians and intelligence specialists around the world had access to these intercepts. At least a few are now coming forward to discuss what they saw.

Here it's worth reiterating something key to this dimension of the accidentalists vs. deliberates contest. The intercepts referenced by Odom, Helms, Kirby et al (whose existence the NSA officially denies) were real-time intelligence gleaned as the attack commenced. By contrast, the NSA-held material Cristol succeeded in declassifying, which he insists validates his view, appear limited to after-action reports by Israeli helicopter pilots. They'd arrived to survey the damage from the attack and played no role in it.

In any case, the disparity between these intelligence officials' revelations and the official, steadfast American government position – "no evidence of deliberateness" – is as enormous as it is remarkable. Obviously, people like Helms (who as director coordinated the entire United States intelligence community) Inman, Morrison, et al were among the world's most knowledgeable. Thus, it seems difficult to understand why during so many years spent probing the Liberty, Cristol apparently

caged only one of like rank for book jacket blurbs. And even this source – ex-Naval Intelligence director Rear Admiral Thomas A. Brooks – now contradicts the judge. He observes in the open-source intelligence journal he edits that the case is not closed.

In any event, why the dearth of American intelligence professionals among sources cited by Cristol? Are they to be lumped in with the "conspiracists," pro-Arabs, etc.?

Cristol does not say. (Various questions to him during the preparation of my Proceedings piece went unanswered, on the grounds, he wrote me, that I was biased.)

The explanation is simple, Liberty men believe. They were steered clear of because their judgments would have collided with the "accidentalists" thesis.

WHY?

The Liberty story entails an important ancillary question. How did this catastrophe occur and why would Israel – in 1967 much less tightly tethered to the American lifeline than now – commit such an outrage?

Those I interviewed are like others who have spoken to the disaster for the past 36 years: They profess not to know about motive. Speculation here is as rife as it is, at times, sensational.

Was the coordinated attack to prevent Washington from learning of an Israeli massacre of Egyptian prisoners of war on the Sinai coast nearby? (The killings were belatedly reported in 1995). Or, more plausibly, did the Israelis put the eavesdropping Liberty out of commission to conceal Israel's impending attack on Syria to seize the strategic Golan Heights?

Why did Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. David McDonald shout orders to the two carrier commanders to recall jets sent to help the Liberty, which was then still under deadly attack? (This, according to Liberty's deck officer James Ennes, quoting an electronic technician aboard the Liberty who had "patched" McNamara and Martin together with the carrier skippers through the Naval Communications Station at Port Laerty, Morocco).

Was the recall on orders from President Lyndon Johnson? Did LBJ fear political retaliation at home if he punished Israel? I don't know. I can say that McNamara once told me, as he has others in virtually identical language, that "I have no recollection of the Liberty, and therefore can be of no assistance to you." This is a dumbfounding remark, given the former defense chief's ability to recount decades-old conversations verbatim.

Such tangential questions, interesting and provocative as they are, remain for the future to answer. But they pale before the issue of responsibility, what United States intelligence experts at the highest levels say they knew – and now publicly maintain about the attack. The curtain of official silence long enshrouding the Liberty seems to be slowly rising, and the fog of war lifting. This can only be to the good for all concerned; and for history.

HUMAN COSTS

Never before or since, according to survivors, has a Navy vessel come under such concerted "friendless" fire, with officialdom's reaction being anything less than outrage. Calls for punishment in like circumstances do seem invariably quick and clarion. Witness for example Japan's 1937 attack on the United States gunboat Panay, North Korea's seizure of the Navy intelligence ship Pueblo in 1968 and the terrorist attack on the Navy destroyer Cole in 2000.

This failure by any administration to probe the motive for the tragedy is wrenching for all who experienced the horror of the

attack, cryptologic technicians and seamen alike. As Dr. Richard Kiepfer, the ship's overwhelmed physician, has written, "Never before in the history of the United States Navy has a Navy Board of Inquiry ignored the testimony of American military eyewitnesses and taken, on faith, the word of their attackers." A harsh judgment.

Kiepfer was referring to a perfunctory hearing convened barely a week following the attack, memorable to survivors mainly for its frequent rejection of testimony and evidence that tended to implicate Israel in a deliberate attack. Shockingly, the court's chief legal counsel, Capt. Ward Boston, in 2002 told Navy Times the naval court was, in fact, a politicized sham. Its conclusions, he declared, had been preordained to exonerate Israel.

Last month, Boston expanded upon those views in an interview with the Union-Tribune. He told Union-Tribune reporter James Crawley that a judgment of "no evidence of deliberate intent" was ordered from Washington to spare Israel embarrassment. Formerly, Cristol had supposed Boston would support him.

The debate on such things rages still. But the aggrieved victims, their families and next of kin aren't really interested in legal minutiae, foreign lobbies or the intrigues of power politics or geo-strategies. They seek what they've always been, and likely always will be, denied: a public forum with official sponsorship but without back-room meddling; the opportunity to express grievances before fellow citizens, and to demand answers to volatile questions left too long unanswered.

The questions are fundamental. To their own government: Why did you abandon us during the attack and ignore us until now? And to Israel: Why did you kill our friends?

HISTORY'S JUDGMENT

Would it serve for the United States to call Israel to book at this late date, to insist the attackers be surrendered for questioning along with relevant paperwork and evidence; say, the orange life raft an Israeli torpedo boat seized after allegedly machine-gunning it and two others in the water?

At least one senior Navy lawyer has said, yes. In 1986, Lt. Cmdr. Walter Jacobsen, writing in the Naval Law Review, argued the case for reopening the Liberty matter. Jacobsen based his argument partly on his belief that the attack violated international law and that the machine-gunning of life rafts released from the Liberty constituted a war crime. No statute of limitations exists for murder or war crimes.

One probe might examine what the men saw and heard and wrote down in deck and radio intercept logs during and after the attack. That would reveal, they insist, the miscarriage of justice of the hastily convened naval court of inquiry.

The second might go to motive: why Israel attacked this virtually unarmed, clearly unthreatening vessel on the high seas, and, per the Watergate process, ask "what the Johnson administration knew and when it knew it."

This is, few would disagree, a calamity – a major historic controversy with possible toxic ramifications to this day. Does this country owe anything to the surviving crew, their next of kin and the public? Certainly not a public reading of every encrypted message. But also, not the boilerplate and obfuscation that have been trotted out for the past 36 years and that smack so transparently of cover-up. At a time when enormous amounts of intelligence and other government records dating to the 1960s have been declassified and released, Washington ought to come clean about the Liberty, no matter how embarrassing that might prove.

Until that happens, the ghosts of the Liberty's dead will find no peace.

Walsh is a journalist based in Washington, D.C. Last June he published "Friendless Fire?" in the U.S. Naval Institute's Proceedings magazine.

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(updated frequently)

'Friendless Fire' (by David Walsh who wrote the above article for the San Diego Union Tribune newspaper):

<http://www.usni.org/proceedings/Articles03/PROwalsh06.htm>

Article about Captain Ward Boston which appeared on the front page of the San Diego Union Tribune last month (on February 17th, 2004):

<http://www.itszone.co.uk/zone0/viewtopic.php?t=13389>

The Attack on the USS Liberty (you can scroll down to the Navy Times article about Captain Boston which is mentioned in the above article by David Walsh):

<http://www.itszone.co.uk/zone0/viewtopic.php?t=2916>

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Alpha
Lieutenant
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Posted: Fri Apr 02, 2004 5:38 pm Post subject: EVIDENCE JUSTIFIES REOPENING USS LIBERTY CASE



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

Union-Tribune editorial
UNDOING A COVER-UP

EVIDENCE JUSTIFIES REOPENING USS LIBERTY CASE

April 1, 2004

The bitter debate over Israel's attack on the U.S. Navy intelligence ship Liberty on June 8, 1967, seems no closer to resolution today than it was 36 years ago. Surely it's time, a generation and a half later, for the U.S. government to release everything it knows about an attack that killed 34 American sailors and intelligence analysts, wounded 171 others and has never been satisfactorily explained.

The Liberty's survivors, the families of those killed and wounded, the American people and history deserve better than a permanently unresolved controversy of this magnitude.

Israel insists that the deadly attack, which occurred in international waters off the Sinai coast while the Liberty eavesdropped on combatants' communications during the Arab-Israeli Six Day War, was a tragic case of mistaken

identity. Surviving members of the Liberty's crew, which suffered 70 percent casualties, are convinced that the prolonged air and sea attack was deliberate. The U.S. government, in what many charged was a transparent cover-up, officially accepted Israel's explanation of mistaken identity.

Yet, the acrimonious controversy lived on, waxing and waning through the years as each side put forth new information and conflicting interpretations.

Over the past year, those who believe that Israel's assault on the Liberty was deliberate have collected important corroborating evidence. As noted in David Walsh's essay in Sunday's Insight section, several former U.S. intelligence officials and analysts, breaking their long silence, say that electronic intercepts of the attacking pilots' radio communications that day prove that the Israelis knew they were attacking an American ship.

Oliver Kirby, a former operations director for the super-secret National Security Agency (for which the Liberty was collecting intelligence), was assigned by NSA in 1967 to review classified information on the attack. In a recent telephone interview with Jim Ennes, a retired naval officer and Liberty survivor, Kirby's first words were, "I can tell you for an absolute certainty that they (the Israelis) knew they were attacking an American ship."

Ward Boston, a retired Navy captain who served as chief legal officer to a Navy court of inquiry on the Liberty attack, says the court's finding of "mistaken identity" was dictated by then-President Lyndon Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. Boston cites "overwhelming evidence" to the contrary that the naval court was ordered to ignore.

These recent revelations, among others, argue persuasively for reopening the Liberty case if the truth is ever to be discovered. Clearly, the U.S. government, not to mention Israel's government, continues to conceal vital information about the Liberty attack. Claims to the contrary notwithstanding, Israel's attack on the Liberty has never been properly investigated.

Almost 37 years after the fact, it's time it was.

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(_) \(_) <http://home.cfl.rr.com/gidusko/liberty/>

_____ (updated frequently) _____

Iraq War to Protect Israel:

<http://www.itszone.co.uk/zone0/viewtopic.php?t=14226>

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Posted: Fri Apr 02, 2004 11:38 pm Post subject: Why Americans are Sending Billions to Israel



Joined: 06 Jan 2003
Posts: 26970

Subject: Why Americans are sending billions to Israel? - By Paul J. Balles

Why Americans are sending billions to Israel

By Paul J. Balles

Al-Jazeera, March 30, 2004

Redress, 29 March 2004

You asked why the US gives billions of dollars to Israel, despite the fact that the Israelis attacked the USS Liberty. You apparently learned only recently of how the Israelis got away with that attack. You seem completely unaware of how Israel and its American Zionists control America.

You should know that Zionists control the US government and the media. If you have a significant position in the government or are a significant voice in public, the Zionists will destroy you! If you object to blind support of Israel, they will label you anti-Semitic and threaten you and cost you your job.

Do you know that if you complain about Zionist influence, you will receive hate mail and threats of violence? If you object to the billions of dollars of your taxpayer money going to Israel, the Zionists will label you a Jew-hating Aryan, and they will pretend that you don't care that "6 million Jews were exterminated in the holocaust".

They will use that "history" to play on yours and everyone else's collective guilt. They will also use it to distract attention from slaughterers like Sharon who kill and maim and destroy everything Palestinian.

Zionist Israel and its American supporters will continue the blatant murders of Palestinians - old men, women, children and cripples - until the Zionist genocide of Palestinians is complete. They truly learned much from the Nazis!

And, yes, America and Americans' billions supports it all - the killing, the maiming, the destruction of property, the deprivation, the imposed poverty, the theft of water rights, the Bantustans, the Apartheid Wall and the suicide bombers.

Do you wonder how America supports the suicide bombers? When an entire people are overpowered, tortured, repressed, subjugated and subdued beyond hope, with America standing on the sidelines applauding and paying for it while Europe turns its head away, what do you expect the people to do?

They can't cry. They have no tears left. They can't fight tanks and Apache helicopters and F-16s with stones! If they fire a rocket that hits no one, the source of the rocket will be

destroyed anyway. Firing rockets against Israelis with the latest American military detection equipment amounts to suicide with no results.

The suicide bombers who sacrifice themselves in a weak attempt at resistance are actually creations of Israel and America. Thanks again to the billions of dollars Americans cough up each year for their endowment.

Don't ever again ask why. Ask fellow Americans when you're going to put a stop to the long distance support for a Mafioso of Zionist hit men.

When are you going to insist that the president and his men - Cheney, Wolfowitz, Perle, Wurmser, Feith, Cohen - all closer to Israel than they are to America - get prosecuted as members of an organized crime syndicate? Make no mistake: Zionism in America is organized crime!

When will you stop electing Senators and Representatives to Congress who can't resist the lure of Zionist support? They're nothing more than legislators who embrace the same organized crime syndicate.

When will you stop reading the crap written and published by the New York Times, the Washington Post and US News? When will you stop being influenced by the broadcasts of the Murdoch empire and Fox News?

When will you stop supporting organized Zionist crime and take America back from Israel for Americans?

*Paul Balles is a retired American university professor and freelance writer who has lived in the Middle East for 34 years. For more information, see <http://www.writerfreelance.com> and <http://www.pballes.com>.

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