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[Memories That Won't Die—A First Hand Account to the Israeli Murder of 34 American Servicemen on the USS Liberty](#)

‘When the first missile hit, I thought one of the main lines from the boiler had blown. The whole ship shook so hard it felt like an earthquake. About 15 seconds later when I smelled what seemed like burned gunpowder and heard the Captain order everyone to General Quarters on the ship, I knew it wasn't no blown pipe, but that the ship was under attack. Everything that took place afterwards moved in slow motion’.

So says ‘John Doe’, a survivor of the attack on the USS Liberty who spoke with American Free Press on condition that his name and rank remain anonymous. Lest anyone think that he is being dramatic or overly-paranoid when it comes to what might happen to him as a result of exercising his right of free speech in the land of the free and home of the brave, the truth is that he has good reason for being concerned. 40 years ago he was told in no uncertain terms by 2 Navy lawyers that he was not to divulge what he personally saw and heard on June 8, 1967 when the state of Israel attacked an unarmed naval vessel of the United States and murdered 34 American servicemen in cold blood. In the 40 years since that time, he has watched as those with the blood of his fellow shipmates on their hands have gotten away with murder and has no illusions about their willingness to do the same to him, a theme that has been made explicitly clear to him on many occasions through threatening phone calls and harassing emails.

‘We had no idea who was attacking us until it was all over...It seemed like it would never end, and the only reason I think it stopped was that they ran out of ammo. Had that not happened, I have no doubt that they would have finished us off for sure. They were out to sink us that day, plain and simple.’

He is surprisingly calm when he speaks about what he witnessed that day. At least by superficial appearances he does not wear any of the typical psychological scars commonplace with men who have seen battle up close and personal. For him, the scars he does wear are those of outrage—outrage that 34 Americans lost their lives in a Pearl Harbor-type sneak attack and that the government for which he worked bent over backwards to cover it up. Rather than swallowing the anger and allowing it to destroy him though (as it has done to so many others) he projects it outwardly, as evidenced by his comments—‘Those SOB's oughtta get on their knees and thank God everyday that I have a wife and kids, because if I were a single man with nothing to lose I would've tracked them down a long time ago and dealt them a dose of justice they would never forget.’

He—like the rest of the crew of the Liberty that day—was taken completely by surprise when the attack began, just as Israel had planned. John Doe had started off the day executing his duties in the engineering plant, the heart of the ship that provided the lifeblood for all its vital functions. He—like the rest of the crew—knew that hostilities were taking place in nearby Sinai, but went about his duties confident that he was safe, as the Liberty was in international waters, and—as Americans are never permitted to forget—Israel was America's ‘greatest ally’.

Besides this, the Liberty was not a vessel of war. In fact she was the most advanced intelligence gathering ship in the world, with no heavy guns, 45 antennae on top and flying a flag a blind man could see from a

mile away. Looking back, the only thing that caused him to sense that strange events were afoot was the fact that there were over-flights taking place every 30-45 minutes by low-flying Israeli reconnaissance aircraft in the 6 hour period immediately preceding the attack and that Capt. McGonagle called the Duty Photographic Teams to the deck to document them. Other than that, everything was just another normal peaceful day—until the first missile struck.

‘When the skipper called for Battle Stations, we grabbed our life jackets and helmets...My job was to go and secure all the hatches in deck 01 to ensure watertight integrity for the ship, and it was at this point,’ he tells AFP, that ‘things begin to blank out.’

‘As I said, everything kind of moved in slow motion. We did what we spent months training to do and did so without thinking much about it.’ But there are some things that he will never forget and which wake him at night sometimes.

‘I’ll never forget that first guy I saw, running down the hall towards me, covered in blood, screaming for someone to help him, or that other guy with a hole in his neck and blood gushing out of him. I’m ashamed to say I don’t even remember who they were, even though they were my own crewman.’

He continues—‘Around midnight I came up to the mess hall and saw that it had been turned into a make-shift triage room. The blood was everywhere...on the floor...on the walls...you could smell it and tried not to slip on it.’ One of the things John remembers best is what he calls the ‘incoherent murmur’—the sounds of men, lying on the floor fighting to survive as the ship’s one doctor—Lt. Kiefer—and 2 navy corpsmen tried desperately to save them. ‘Unless you honed in on one of the men and concentrated, it all just sounded like noise, but then once you did, you could hear what was going on. Some prayed out loud, begging God to let them live. Some called out for their moms. We ran out of medical supplies pretty quick and so the men had to lie there until help came 18 hours later, groaning in agony. We later found out that Doc Keifer had taken several pieces of shrapnel in the gut that none of us knew about and didn’t even tend to himself until he did what he could for the rest of the men.’

Going up top to survey the damage, he saw that it was just as bad there as it was below. ‘The deck was usually clean as a whistle, but now it was covered with blood and littered with pieces of flesh, shards of bone and various other body parts of the fellas who had been up there when Israel unleashed hell on us. Bullet holes everywhere you looked. Seemed like there was a million of them.’

He related to AFP some of the other scenes visible on the deck that day—A shipmate lying near the main gun whose body was gone from the waist down...What looked like 5 gallons of blood that pooled in a low spot as it sloshed back and forth with the rocking of the ship...Another crewman whose foot was caught in a cable as he hung upside down, suspended a few feet above the deck, and a few feet from him, one spent casing from the gun. The gunner only managed to fire off one round in the attack before the lower half of his body was blown off.

In John’s opinion, the fact that only one round had been fired was just more proof as to how effective Israel had been in getting the Americans to lower their guard before they were sucker-punched with the sneak attack. John told AFP that Capt. McGonagle, the ship’s skipper, himself covered with blood from shrapnel he caught in his arm and leg, limped out on to the deck and ordered the bigger pieces of flesh and bone be collected and the smaller ones washed off the deck with the firehose. The larger remains were later buried in a singular grave at Arlington National Cemetery.

John Doe could go on all day if pressed to do so, but out of consideration for him the interview is cut short.

He had a few parting words though about the matter–

‘Those SOB’s murdered 34 Americans and for the last 40 years our government has covered it up and protected those who did it. It started with one Texas clown named Johnson and continues to this day with another Texas clown named Bush. Had the Liberty attack been dealt with as it would have were it any other country, we wouldn’t find ourselves in this mess today. That region is not worth one drop of American blood, and the thought of them getting away with this is what p***** me off more than anything else.

John was told 4 decades ago by the US Government that he would get his chance to speak one day. ‘Well, it’s been 40 years and they haven’t contacted me yet, although I did manage to get \$200.00 after the State Department filed a claim against the state of Israel for what took place that day. I was lucky, some of the other guys only received \$56.00 for what they went through.’

‘Forty years ago they told us that speaking about it would be doing a ‘disservice’ to the dead. Hell, I can’t think of a bigger disservice than what’s been done to the fellas than the 40 years of silence they’ve gotten on this issue from their own government. We are tired of the silence, tired of the lies. We have been fighting the devil and his advocate for 40 years now, in this case, Israel being the devil and the US government being his advocate.’

For more on what took place that day, readers of AFP are encouraged to go to the website dedicated to the memory of the men of the USS Liberty found at www.usliberty.org. Those interested in watching the video documentary on what took place entitled ‘Dead in the Water’ can write to the USS Liberty Veterans Association, c/o Moe Shafer/4994 Lower Roswell Rd, Suite 33/ Marietta Georgia 30068. The cost of the video is \$25.00 and all proceeds go to the LVA for purposes of keeping the Liberty story alive.

2007 Mark Glenn–Correspondent, American Free Press Newspaper

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