

USS Liberty: Israel's War Crimes Have Killed Americans

If the president loves to honor the military, start with the U.S.S. Liberty

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Imagine if you will a ship from a nation not at war with anyone sailing in international waters on a quiet June day being suddenly attacked by unidentified warplanes and torpedo boats, their markings covered up to conceal their country of origin. The vessel under attack had little with which to defend itself, but its crew heroically made sure that a large national flag was hoisted to demonstrate that it was not a belligerent in anyone's conflict. The attackers noted the nationality of the vessel, but persisted in their aggression in a clear attempt to sink the ship and kill all its crew. The officers on the ship radioed that they were under attack and asked for help, but even though friendly fighter aircraft were within striking distance and were automatically dispatched, they were then mysteriously recalled. The attacks lasted for two hours, longer than the Pearl Harbor attack that brought about American entry into World War 2, killing and wounding more than two hundred of the crew. Life rafts lowered into the water as the vessel seemed to be sinking were machine gunned by the attacking aircraft and torpedo boats to make escape or evacuation of the wounded impossible but the captain and survivors worked heroically, and successfully, to keep the ship afloat. When the vessel finally made it back to port, the officers and crew were sworn to silence by their own government and a cover-up was initiated that has persisted to this day. Many of the ship's survivors have died since that day 53 years ago, and the attempts of the remainder to see justice before they are also gone have been ignored.

I am, of course, referring to the Israeli attack on the *U.S.S. Liberty*, which took place on June 8, 1967, nearly 53 years ago. The anniversary of the attack is coming up in a month and the remaining officers and crew will hold a ceremony at the Navy memorial in Washington D.C. to honor the memory of their thirty-four shipmates killed and the 172 who were wounded. Seventy per cent of the crew were casualties, the highest percentage of casualties on any ship that remained afloat in the history of the U.S. Navy. The lightly armed intelligence gathering vessel *Liberty* and its heroic crew emerged from the near destruction as the most decorated ship for valor in a single action in the United States Navy.



Israeli willingness to attack and kill Americans unnecessarily, apparently to send a message, has been noted before. There is the case of Rachel Corrie (image on the right) run over by an Israeli bulldozer and of Furkan Dogan, a Turkish-American who was, like the crew of the *Liberty*, killed in international waters when he sailed on the Gaza relief vessel Mavi Marmara. But in spite of that, the deliberate attempt to destroy the *Liberty*, which, according to former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, was clearly approved at the highest level of the Jewish state's government, still has shock value.

Israel's apologists, a virtual fixture at all levels in the U.S. government as well as in academia and the media, have long been making the argument that the attack on the *Liberty* was some kind of "friendly fire" accident. But the [relatively recent discovery](#) that a Navy spy plane intercepted and recorded Israeli both helicopter and fighter pilots mentioning the American flag displayed by the ship during the attack suggests otherwise. Other recordings made of the Israeli communications [revealed that](#) some of the pilots did not want to attack. One pilot said, "This is an American ship. I can see the flag. Do you still want us to attack?" Israeli ground control responded, "Yes, follow orders. Hit it!" before admonishing the pilots to "finish the job."

But while one expects the Israelis to behave abominably, based on any assessment of the years of war crimes committed in places like Lebanon and what remains of Palestine, the greatest crime against the *Liberty* crew was committed by the United States government itself. President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara reportedly were informed of the attack shortly after it began and it was Johnson who twice personally ordered the recall of the U.S. fighter planes going to rescue the *Liberty*. Admiral Lawrence Geis, commander of the carrier group in the Mediterranean that the planes had launched from, objected and [McNamara responded testily](#) that "President Johnson is not going to go to war or embarrass an American ally over a few sailors." It was McNamara, again acting on LBJ's orders, who had the crew sequestered after the ship made it to Malta, issuing a "gag-order" over the incident with the understanding that anyone who spoke up would be secretly court martialed and imprisoned.

To maintain the cover-up, Captain William McGonagle, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his role in saving the ship, had his medal awarded without any publicity in a private ceremony at the Washington Naval Yard rather than at the White House as was otherwise normal. The President of the United States did not make the award, yet another

dismissal of the valor of the *Liberty* crew.

Normally an attack on a U.S. Navy vessel would have mandated an official Court of Inquiry, but in the case of the *Liberty* an improvised team consisting of Admiral Isaac Kidd and Chief Counsel Ward Boston was pulled together in the Mediterranean under orders from Admiral John S. McCain, father of Senator John McCain, who was based in London. The Navy's official 'Court of Inquiry' therefore consisted in reality of just Kidd and Boston making a quick visit to the *Liberty* at sea and then rushing back to Washington via London, where McCain endorsed the 700 page draft document without reading it. The hastily prepared report bypassed all ordinary fact-finding and legal review procedures and no one knows what channels the 'Findings of the Court of Inquiry' followed in Washington.

Image below: Lyndon B. Johnson and Robert McNamara (Source: History.com)



Acting under orders from the White House, the inquiry had been given only a week to prepare its report, a procedure that normally requires six months. The result was also predetermined by McNamara acting for LBJ, who ordered that the conclusion would be that the attack on the *Liberty* had been a "case of mistaken identity."

No crewmen from the *Liberty* were even allowed to provide formal testimony during the inquiry proceedings. Nevertheless, the inquiry's chief counsel Ward Boston [subsequently confirmed](#) in a sworn affidavit that he and Kidd had strongly disagreed with the coerced findings, believing instead that Israel had staged an unprovoked attack intending to sink the ship and kill all the crew. Admiral Kidd referred to the Israelis as "murderous bastards." Boston also observed that the transcript of the court of inquiry that was subsequently released had been altered, presumably by someone acting on behalf of the White House, to delete and change testimony damaging to Israel.

As is often the case, there is a back story to what happened to the *Liberty*. In the years prior to the attack on the *Liberty*, President John F. Kennedy was concerned over powerful and wealthy American Jews attempting to hijack U.S. foreign policy to favor Israel. He also took steps to prevent Israeli development of nuclear weapons. After he was assassinated, his successor as president Lyndon B. Johnson, who [has been described](#) as having a political career "interwoven with Jews," saw things quite differently. He turned a blind eye over the Israeli nuclear program and surrounded himself with Jewish friends and advisors who were actively engaged in promoting the Zionist agenda, some of them plausibly as actual agents of Mossad.

Most prominent among that group were the Krims, Arthur and Mathilde, he a leading media lawyer and studio head who was a Democratic Party fundraiser and she a geneticist, a Swiss born convert to Judaism who had lived in British Mandate Palestine with her first husband, an Irgun terrorist. Jewish terror was a cause which she actively supported. The Krims were regular companions of LBJ throughout his presidency, with a reserved room in the White House and a house near his ranch in Stonewall Texas when he was on vacation there. Johnson also stayed at their mansion in New York.

At the time of the Six Day War when the *Liberty* was attacked, the Krims were constantly at the side of LBJ and it is generally accepted that they were both working on behalf of the Israeli government to cultivate a decisive presidential tilt towards Israel. Johnson, in fact,

was informed of the Israeli intention to go to war against its neighbors in advance and gave the green light, even agreeing to come to the aid of the Jewish state if things went wrong. To seal the deal, Mathilde was even having an affair with LBJ, a situation well known to White House staff and to the Secret Service.

Since 1967, there have been a number of documentaries, [books](#) and unofficial inquiries regarding the attack on the *Liberty*, but resistance from the usual suspects has meant that the story has not become better known. Meanwhile Congress, the Pentagon and the White House have refused to authorize fair and impartial formal hearings that would recognize the deficiencies in the 1967 inquiry and which would include testimony from the remaining *Liberty* survivors. Senator John McCain was notorious for his offhand treatment of entreaties from the survivors as was then congressman and now governor Ron DeSantis of Florida, a former Navy Seal. DeSantis now calls himself the most pro-Israel governor in the United States.

The most serious unofficial inquiries have involved former military officers. In 2003, Admiral Thomas Moorer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, formed an independent commission of inquiry to look into the attack. It produced *Loss of Liberty*, a documentary that included actual interviews with survivors. The commission, which included Rear Admiral Merlin Staring, Marine General Ray Davis, and Ambassador James Akins, reviewed all documentary evidence in the case and interviewed both survivors and other naval officers who were involved indirectly. They learned that the *Liberty* had been surveilled by the Israelis for at least eight hours prior to the attack and that the ship was both clearly marked as American and was unmistakable as a uniquely configured and immediately recognizable intelligence collection vessel, not even close to the profile of an Egyptian horse transporter as Israel subsequently claimed. During the carefully planned attack, Israeli used radio jamming in an attempt to prevent the *Liberty* from radioing its predicament.

Moorer's commission concluded that Israel had deliberately attacked the *Liberty* and sought to sink it and kill its entire crew. The crewmen who were killed were "murdered" by Israel while the U.S. should have regarded the attack as an act of war and responded appropriately. The cover-up of what had taken place was ordered by the White House and the fact that the truth about the incident continues to be hidden is a "national disgrace." In an [op-ed Moorer wrote](#) in 2004, he concluded by asking "Did our government put Israel's interest ahead of our own? If so, why?"

In October 2003 the Moorer commission [presented its report](#) on Capitol Hill, though its audience was often limited to congressional staffers rather than the understandably fearful members. One year later Representative John Conyers of Michigan overcame considerable resistance to have the report and some accompanying information entered [into the Congressional Record](#). Moorer and Admiral Staring, a former Judge Advocate General of the Navy, who had been the legal officer in the McCain office in London who had not been allowed to carefully review the Court of Inquiry report, [continued to advocate](#) for an honest investigation of the attack on the *Liberty* until they died in 2004 and 2013 respectively.

Which leads us to the present and the question of justice for the *U.S.S. Liberty* survivors who will be gathering next month. The tale of the *Liberty* demonstrates that even fifty-three years ago the United States government was betraying its own people out of deference to Jewish power and to the state of Israel. If anything, as horrific as the killing of 34 personnel on board of the *Liberty* was, the situation has gotten even worse as Washington sends billions of dollars to the Jewish state annually while also giving its kleptocratic government a

green light to commit war crimes and other aggressions that will ultimately draw in the United States, and could plausibly bring about our ruination. It is unpleasant to say the least to watch an unrestrained and unprincipled client state do terrible damage to a much larger patron enabled by the machinations of a dual-loyalty fifth column, but that is what we are seeing.

And the actual rot really began with the attack on the *U.S.S. Liberty*, when patriotic Americans died at the whim of a feckless president who loved a foreign country more than his own. One hopes he is rotting in hell. Today few Americans even know about the *Liberty* even though they are now facing an election in which two presidential candidates will seek to outdo each other in expressing their love for Israel. Trump and Biden should instead take pause and first demand as a *sine qua non* justice for the survivors of the *U.S.S. Liberty*.

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