Trump in Israel: Not Remembering the USS Liberty

By Ray McGovern
Global Research, May 23, 2017
Consortiumnews 21 May 2017

It is safe to assume that when President Donald Trump lands in Israel Monday, he will not have been briefed on the irrefutable evidence that, nearly 50 years ago – on June 8, 1967 – Israel deliberately attacked the USS Liberty in international waters, killing 34 U.S. sailors and wounding more than 170 other crew. All of Trump's predecessors – Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama – have refused to address the ugly reality and/or covered up the attack on the Liberty.

It is not too late for someone to fill Trump in on this shameful episode, on the chance he may wish to show more courage than former presidents and warn the Israelis that this kind of thing will not be tolerated while he is president.

A new book by Philip Nelson titled: *Remember the Liberty: Almost Sunk by Treason on the High Seas*, is a must-read for anyone wishing to understand what actually happened to the Liberty and to contemplate the implications.

As I wrote in the book's Foreword: Even today, scandalously few Americans have heard of the deliberate Israeli attack on the USS Liberty, because the cowardly U.S. political, military, and media establishments have managed to hide what happened. No one "important" wanted to challenge Israel's lame "oops-mistake" excuse. Intercepted Israeli communications show beyond doubt it was no "mistake."

Chief Petty Officer J.Q. "Tony" Hart, who monitored conversations between then-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Sixth Fleet Carrier Division Commander Rear Admiral Lawrence Geis, reported McNamara's instructive reply to Geis, who had protested the order to recall the U.S. warplanes on their way to engage those attacking the Liberty. McNamara:

> "President Johnson is not going to go to war or embarrass an American ally (sic) over a few sailors."

The late Adm. Thomas Moorer after interviewing the commanders of the U.S. aircraft carriers America and Saratoga confirmed that McNamara ordered the aircraft back to their carriers. Moorer called it

> "the most disgraceful act I witnessed in my entire military career."

USS Liberty (AGTR-5) receives assistance from units of the Sixth Fleet, after she was attacked and seriously damaged by Israeli forces off the Sinai Peninsula on June 8, 1967. (US Navy photo)

Thanks to this book, those who care about such things can learn what actually happened 50 years ago:

(1) On June 8, 1967, Israel attempted to sink the US Navy intelligence collection ship USS Liberty and leave no survivors. The attack came by aircraft and torpedo boat, in full daylight in international waters during the Six-Day Israeli-Arab War;

(2) The U.S. cover-up taught the Israelis that they could *literally* get away with murder; they killed 34 U.S. sailors (and wounded more than 170 others); and

(3) As part of an unconscionable government cover-up, the Navy threatened to court martial and imprison any survivor who so much as told his wife what had actually happened. (This, incidentally, put steroids to the PTSD suffered by many of the survivors.)

One Stab at Truth

The only investigation worth the name was led by Adm. Moorer, who had been Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He led a blue-ribbon, independent commission to examine what happened to the Liberty. Among the findings announced by the commission on October 2003:

> "...Unmarked Israeli aircraft dropped napalm canisters on the USS Liberty bridge, and fired 30mm cannon and rockets into the ship; survivors estimate 30 or more sorties were flown over the ship by a minimum of 12 attacking Israeli planes. ...

> "...The torpedo boat attack involved not only the firing of torpedoes, but machine-gunning of Liberty's firefighters and stretcher-bearers. ... The Israeli torpedo boats later returned to machine-gun at close range three of the Liberty's life rafts that had been lowered into the water by survivors to rescue the most seriously wounded."

Shortly before he died in February 2004, Adm. Moorer strongly appealed for the truth to be brought out and pointed directly at what he saw as the main obstacle:

> "I've never seen a President ... stand up to Israel. ... If the American people understood what a grip these people have on our government, they would rise up in arms." [As quoted by Richard Curtiss in A Changing Image: American Perception of the Arab-Israeli Dispute.]

Echoing Moorer, former U.S. Ambassador Edward Peck, who served many years in the Middle East, condemned Washington's attitude toward Israel as "obsequious, unctuous subservience ... at the cost of the lives and morale of our own service members and their families."

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

And the Six-Day War? Most Americans believe the Israelis were forced to defend against a military threat from Egypt. Not so, admitted former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin 35 years ago:

> "In June 1967, we had a choice. The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that [Egyptian President] Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him." [The New York Times quoting an August 1982 Begin speech.]

Adm. Moorer kept asking why our government continues to subordinate American interests to those of Israel. It is THE question.

The War in Syria

Fast forward to the catastrophe that is now Syria. U.S. policy support for illusory "moderate rebels" there – including false-flag chemical attacks blamed on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad – can only be fully understood against the mirror of U.S. acquiescence to Israeli objectives.

New York Times Jerusalem Bureau Chief in 2013, Jodi Rudoren, received an unusually candid response when she asked senior Israeli officials about Israel's preferred outcome in Syria. In

a New York Times article on September 6, 2013, titled "Israel Backs Limited Strike Against Syria," Rudoren reported the Israeli view that the best outcome for Syria's civil war was no outcome:

> "For Jerusalem, the status quo, horrific as it may be from a humanitarian perspective, seems preferable to either a victory by Mr. Assad's government and his Iranian backers or a strengthening of rebel groups, increasingly dominated by Sunni jihadis.
>
> "'This is a playoff situation in which you need both teams to lose, but at least you don't want one to win — we'll settle for a tie,' said Alon Pinkas, a former Israeli consul general in New York. 'Let them both bleed, hemorrhage to death: that's the strategic thinking here. As long as this lingers, there's no real threat from Syria.'"

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ross fires a tomahawk land attack missile from the Mediterranean Sea into Syria, April 7, 2017. (Navy photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Robert S. Price)

Obama may have read or been briefed on Rudoren's article. In any event, last year he told journalist Jeffrey Goldberg how proud he is at having resisted strong pressure from virtually all his advisors to fire cruise missiles on Syria in September 2013. Instead, Obama chose to take advantage of Russian President Vladimir Putin's offer to get the Syrians to surrender their chemical weapons for destruction, verified by the U.N., aboard a U.S. ship configured for such destruction. President Trump, in contrast, chose to go with his "mad-dog" advisors. It is not yet clear whether he was successfully mousetrapped, or whether he saw the April 4 chemical incident in Syria as an opportunity to "retaliate," and get a bump in popularity.

There are wider ramifications of rank dishonesty and cover-up, at which Establishment Washington excels. Have we not seen this movie before? Think Iraq. Once again, the "intelligence" is being "fixed."

Back to the Liberty, Adm. Moorer is right in saying that, if Americans were told the truth about what happened on June 8, 1967, they might be more discriminating in seeing through Israel's rhetoric and objectives. Moorer insisted that we owe no less to brave men of the USS Liberty, but also to every man and woman who is asked to wear the uniform of the United States. And he is right about that too.

This book makes a huge contribution toward those worthy ends.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as a CIA analyst for 27 years, and was "on duty" when the USS Liberty was attacked.

The original source of this article is Consortiumnews
Copyright © Ray McGovern, Consortiumnews, 2017

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Ray McGovern