

Israel's Attack on The USS Liberty: An Act of War, A False Flag, A Gross Betrayal

What We Should Have Learned from the Attack on USS Liberty

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It is one of the greatest lies that most Americans – in fact most people around the world – have never heard of. And it reveals much about the true relationship between the United States and one of its “closest allies,” the State of Israel.

This was an act of war — a false flag attack, a mass execution, a war crime, a gross betrayal, and the beginning of an exercise in deception and propaganda that continues to this day.

It was 50 years ago that Israel launched a shocking and brutal attack on an American intelligence ship, the USS Liberty, as it cruised in international waters near the Sinai Peninsula and the coast of Gaza. In the intervening years, the governments of the two countries — as well as the mainstream media — have maintained a grotesque and transparent cover-up in support of the lie that the incident was a simply a “tragic accident,” a case of “mistaken identity.”

But the survivors know that this was no accident.

Over a span of close to two hours on the afternoon of June 8, 1967, under clear blue skies, the Israeli military did all it could do to sink the Liberty and kill all 294 on board, three of those civilians. This did not succeed, but at the end of the attack, 34 crew members were dead and between 171 and 174 were injured (depending on which source you use). The ship had been positively identified by Israeli planes as an American ship as early as 6 a.m. that day, eight hours before the attack began.

The assault on the Liberty, which flew a large American flag (as confirmed by every surviving member of the crew) and clear identification on its hull as a non-combat ship, took place on the fourth day of Israel's Six Day War against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The NSA spy ship looked like no other in the region as it carried all manner of sophisticated surveillance equipment.

The Liberty had been ordered into the Mediterranean Sea to monitor communications related to the Arab/Israeli conflict (although its precise mission remains classified). At 2 p.m., it was hit by a rocket attack launched from fighter jets travelling at high speed. The nightmare was just beginning.

The ship was hit with rockets, cannon fire, and even napalm. Eight sailors were killed in this initial assault. The Liberty was unable to contact the Sixth Fleet for help because its emergency frequency had been jammed and communications equipment badly damaged or

destroyed. But sometime later, one brave crew member risked his life to make temporary repairs, and as a result, a distress signal was sent to two aircraft carriers in the region, the USS Saratoga and the USS America.

Planes were immediately dispatched to aid the Liberty. The pilots were authorized at that time to destroy the attacking planes and ships. But before they could arrive, new orders were given recalling them — even though the attack was still ongoing.

About 35 minutes into the attack, three Israeli ships reached the scene and began launching torpedoes. One hit the Liberty, killing another 26 crewmen and created a nearly 40-foot hole in the hull. In addition, a steady spray of machine gun fire targeted firefighters and rescue workers who were carrying stretchers with the wounded. The Israeli boats even fired upon life rafts that had been lowered into the water in an effort to save the most seriously hurt. An order to abandon ship had to be rescinded.

In 2005, the USS Liberty Veterans Association sent a [report](#) entitled, “A Report: War Crimes Committed Against U.S. Military Personnel, June 8, 1967,” to the Secretary of the Army. In that report, we learn how the attack came to an end while the Liberty was still afloat.

“Shortly after the Sixth Fleet transmission of the rules of engagement to its dispatched rescue aircraft, the Israeli torpedo boats suddenly broke off their attack and transmitted messages asking if USS Liberty required assistance. At the same time, an Israeli naval officer notified the US Naval Attaché at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv that Israeli forces had mistakenly attacked a United States Navy ship and apologized. The Naval Attaché notified the United States Sixth Fleet and the rescue aircraft were recalled before they arrived at the scene of the attack.” P.8

Most Americans are completely unaware of this act of war by one ally against another. The main reason for this is that the American media have almost completely suppressed any mention of the event. Statements by high-level military and civilian officials have received virtually no attention. Researcher Alison Weir, who has written extensively about the history of Palestine and Israel, wrote an [article](#) on the web site *If Americans Knew* about the media silence that is well worth reading:

“Whatever the reason, until American news media start being conscientious enough to get their reports on Israel right, Americans are going to continue being disastrously misinformed about one of the globe’s most destabilizing, tragic, and potentially calamitous areas of conflict.”

An [article](#) on *Washington’s Blog* from February 2015 sums up the evidence that the Israelis knew full well that they were attacking an American ship.

“Recently-declassified radio transcripts between the Israeli attack forces and ground control show that — at least 3 times — an Israeli fighter jet pilot identified the craft as American, and asked whether ground control was sure he should attack. Ground control repeatedly said, yes, attack the vessel.”

The article also explains how the aim of this for Israel was to make it look like Egypt had been responsible for the attack, potentially bringing the U.S. into the war.

An exception to the general media blackout of this subject is a 2007 [article](#) in the *Baltimore Sun*, which deals in some detail with the question of how the Israelis *had* to know they were attacking an American ship and how this has been confirmed by declassified government documents.

“[The documents] strengthen doubts about the U.S. National Security Agency’s position that it never intercepted the communications of the attacking Israeli pilots — communications, according to those who remember seeing them, that showed the Israelis knew they were attacking an American naval vessel.

“The documents also suggest that the U.S. government, anxious to spare Israel’s reputation and preserve its alliance with the U.S., closed the case with what even some of its participants now say was a hasty and seriously flawed investigation.”

Report findings changed in Washington

A U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry was ordered immediately after the attack but only given a week to assess what had happened. For 37 years, the senior legal counsel to the Inquiry, Capt. Ward Boston Jr., kept his feelings about that attack and the hasty investigation to himself. But after a book supporting the official cover-up was written by Jay Cristol called *The Liberty Incident*, Boston felt compelled to speak out.

He reveals that Admiral John S. McCain (father of former presidential candidate John McCain), who was Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, refused the request by Boston and the Inquiry’s president, Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, that they be allowed to travel to Israel to interview those who participated in the attack. A request that they be able to interview wounded crew members who could not physically attend the hearings was also denied.

In his [statement](#), dated Jan. 9, 2004, Boston makes some incredible charges, including that the Inquiry’s final report was changed in Washington to absolve Israel:

“The evidence was clear. Both Admiral Kidd and I believed with certainty that this attack, which killed 34 American sailors and injured 172 others, was a deliberate effort to sink an American ship and murder its entire crew.

I am certain that the Israeli pilots that undertook the attack, as well as their superiors, who had ordered the attack, were well aware that the ship was American.

“I am outraged at the efforts of the apologists for Israel in this country to claim that this attack was a case of “mistaken identity.”

“Admiral Kidd told me, after returning from Washington, D.C. that he had been ordered to sit down with two civilians from either the White House or the Defense Department, and rewrite portions of the court’s findings.

“Admiral Kidd also told me that he had been ordered to “put the lid” on everything having to do with the attack on USS Liberty. We were never to speak of it and we were to caution everyone else involved that they could never speak of it again.

"I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of that statement as I know that the Court of Inquiry transcript that has been released to the public is not the same one that I certified and sent off to Washington.

He concludes:

"Contrary to the misinformation presented by Cristol and others, it is important for the American people to know that it is clear that Israel is responsible for deliberately attacking an American ship and murdering American sailors, whose bereaved shipmates have lived with this egregious conclusion for many years."

It must be noted that the incident has actually been condemned by some very high-profile people, including then Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, who was named chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff shortly after the Liberty attack.

In a [diplomatic note](#) from June 10, 1967, Rusk wrote to the Israeli ambassador:

The subsequent attack by Israeli torpedo boats, substantially after the vessel was or should have been identified by Israeli military forces, manifests the same reckless disregard for human life. . . . The U.S.S. Liberty was peacefully engaged, posed no threat whatsoever to the torpedo boats, and obviously carried no armament affording it a combat capability. It could and should have been scrutinized visually at close range before torpedoes were fired."

Moorer, who passed away in 2004, published this [statement](#) in 1997:

"Israel knew perfectly well that the ship was American. After all, the Liberty's American flag and markings were in full view in perfect visibility for the Israeli aircraft that overflew the ship eight times over a period of nearly eight hours prior to the attack. I am confident that Israel knew the Liberty could intercept radio messages from all parties and potential parties to the ongoing war, then in its fourth day, and that Israel was preparing to seize the Golan Heights from Syria despite President Johnson's known opposition to such a move. I think they realized that if we learned in advance of their plan, there would be a tremendous amount of negotiating between Tel Aviv and Washington.

"And I believe Moshe Dayan concluded that he could prevent Washington from becoming aware of what Israel was up to by destroying the primary source of acquiring that information the USS Liberty. The result was a wanton sneak attack that left 34 American sailors dead and 171 seriously injured. What is so chilling and cold-blooded, of course, is that they could kill as many Americans as they did in confidence that Washington would cooperate in quelling any public outcry."

A deliberate act of murder

Before his death, Moorer participated in the "[Independent Commission](#) of Inquiry into the Israeli Attack on USS Liberty, the Recall of Military Rescue Support Aircraft while the Ship was Under Attack, and the Subsequent Cover-up by the United States Government," a blue-ribbon commission formed to study the events of that day. Other members included General Raymond G. Davis, Rear Admiral Merlin Staring, and Ambassador James Akins (former U.S.

ambassador to Saudi Arabia).

Among the Commission's most explosive findings were:

- That there is compelling evidence that Israel's attack was a deliberate attempt to destroy an American ship and kill her entire crew;
- That in attacking USS Liberty, Israel committed acts of murder against American servicemen and an act of war against the United States;
- That fearing conflict with Israel, the White House deliberately prevented the U.S. Navy from coming to the defense of USS Liberty by recalling Sixth Fleet military rescue support while the ship was under attack;
- That although Liberty was saved from almost certain destruction through the heroic efforts of the ship's Captain, William L. McGonagle (MOH), and his brave crew, surviving crew members were later threatened with 'court-martial, imprisonment or worse' if they exposed the truth; and were abandoned by their own government;
- That due to the influence of Israel's powerful supporters in the United States, the White House deliberately covered up the facts of this attack from the American people;
- That due to continuing pressure by the pro-Israel lobby in the United States, this attack remains the only serious naval incident that has never been thoroughly investigated by Congress; to this day, no surviving crew member has been permitted to officially and publicly testify about the attack;
- That there has been an official cover-up without precedent in American naval history; the existence of such a cover-up is now supported by statements of Rear Admiral Merlin Staring, USN (Ret.), former Judge Advocate General of the Navy; and Captain Ward Boston, USN, (Ret.), the chief counsel to the Navy's 1967 Court of Inquiry of Liberty attack;
- That the truth about Israel's attack and subsequent White House cover-up continues to be officially concealed from the American people to the present day and is a national disgrace
- That a danger to our national security exists whenever our elected officials are willing to subordinate American interests to those of any foreign nation, and specifically are unwilling to challenge Israel's interests when they conflict with American interests.

The USS Liberty Veterans Association report mentioned earlier sums up the events from the perspective of the survivors. It tells a powerful story. From the report's conclusion:

"The failure of the United States government to undertake a complete investigation of the Israeli attack on USS Liberty has resulted in grievous harm to the surviving victims, as well as to the families of all crew members.

Equally serious, this failure has resulted in an indelible stain upon the honor of the United States of America. It has sent a signal to America's serving men and women that their welfare is always subordinate to the interests of a foreign state. The only conceivable reason for this failure is the political decision to put the interests of Israel ahead of those of American servicemen, employees, and veterans." P.32

It also tells the story of how the veterans continue to be viciously attacked by Israel and its

supporters. On page 20 of the report, we read of how the victims of the attack are still victimized to this day:

“As a result of the public relations campaign undertaken on behalf of Israel, the USS Liberty survivors have been vilified for their assertions that the attack was deliberate and for their ongoing quest for justice. They are characterized as “neo-Nazis”, “anti-Semites”, and “conspiracy theorists” for wanting nothing more than an honest, open investigation of the attack on their ship and themselves.”

While monetary compensation was paid to the survivors and the families of those killed, no one in the Israeli military has even been reprimanded for their part in the attack.

The Jewish Virtual Library web site has an article that sums up the growing questions that Israel carried out the attack with intent and premeditation. But just when you think you might be reading a fairly even-handed assessment of the evidence comes this:

“The picture that emerges is not one of crime at all, nor even of criminal negligence, but of a string of failed communications, human errors, unfortunate coincidences and equipment failures on both the American and Israeli sides – the kind of tragic, senseless mistake that is all too common in the thick of war.”

An Israeli court of inquiry into the Liberty attack amounted to nothing more than an official cover-up. The inquiry concluded that the ship had no flag at all identifying it, which was contradicted by everyone on board (the ship initially flew a 5 x 8 foot flag but that became damaged in the attack, it was replaced with a second much larger one. The inquiry also concluded that a report that a ship had been shelling Israeli positions in the Sinai Peninsula led to confusion and errors.

What have we learned?

I understand that many of you reading this article will feel you already understand the implications of this event. In addition to perhaps having read all about the USS Liberty, you may have educated yourselves about geopolitics, false flags, and how power is wielded within a fog of lies and propaganda. You may also know the history of Israel and Zionism and what has been done to the Palestinian people over the past seven decades.

But if you do understand all of this, you are part of a very small minority. Most have never heard of this terrible act of barbarity and therefore have no idea what its implications are. Nevertheless, there are some serious lessons we must all learn from this event (and I’m sure readers could contribute more):

1. Israel is capable of attacking its allies, and especially the U.S., to further its Zionist agenda. One can’t help but think about 9/11 in this regard.
2. Israel will lie to America to draw it into a war under false pretenses. It also has no problem blaming a third party like Egypt for an atrocity it did not commit.
3. Israel wields sufficient power within American circles of power that the U.S. government is more concerned about not embarrassing Israel than it is about defending its own people.
4. The American media will participate in a cover-up of an act of war against

America rather than point the finger at Israel.

5. Israel uses the same attacks against the Liberty survivors that governments and mainstream media use to marginalize “conspiracy theorists.”
6. Israel will also play the “anti-Semitic” and “neo-Nazi” cards against American servicemen who were victimized in the attack and who are continuing to demand accountability.
7. Even half a century later, the American government will continue to protect this lie and allow the victimization of the survivors to continue.

Israel cultivates the image of a country and a people who are victims, constantly under threat. But one thing that this horrifying event really makes clear is that Israel threatens anyone or any country — even supposed “friends” — that get in the way of its political objectives.

Some observers have claimed that the USS Liberty attack was a false flag intended to implicate Egypt and draw the U.S. into a war that it did not want to be part of. Certainly Israel’s determination to sink the ship and kill all aboard supports this idea. Others believe Israel was afraid the Americans would learn through the Liberty’s surveillance efforts that Israel was planning to initiate hostilities with Jordan or Syria, which it had been urged not to do by Lyndon Johnson. Perhaps both are true.

But whatever the specific goals, this dark moment in history clearly reveals much that we should be talking about today. And like 9/11, it is one of those events that shows us how our world really functions and how what we see on the TV news and in newspapers is more about hiding the truth than explaining it.

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