

# A new look at Israel's bombing of the USS Liberty

On the fourth day of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the intelligence ship USS *Liberty* was steaming slowly in international waters, 14 miles off the Sinai Peninsula. Israeli armoured forces were racing deep into the Sinai in hot pursuit of the retreating Egyptian Army.

*Liberty*, a World War II freighter, had been converted into an intelligence vessel by the top-secret U.S. National Security Agency, and packed with the latest signals and electronic interception equipment. The ship bristled with antennae and electronic "ears" including TRSSCOMM, which delivered real-time intercepts to Washington. It was to monitor communications of the belligerents in the third Arab-Israeli war: Israel and her foes, Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

At 0800 hrs, 8 June, 1967, eight Israeli recon flights flew over *Liberty*, which was flying a large American flag. At 1400, waves of Israeli Mystere and Mirage-III fighter-bombers attacked with rockets, napalm, and cannon, concentrating on the ship's antennae and electronic dishes. *Liberty* was left afire, listing. Eight of her crew lay dead, 100 wounded, including Commander William McGonagle.

At 1424, Israeli torpedo boats attacked, raking the burning *Liberty* with 20 and 40 mm shells. At 1431 a torpedo hit the *Liberty* amidships, where the signals intelligence sys-

tems were located. Twenty-five more Americans died.

At 1515, the crew were ordered to abandon ship. Israeli warships poured machine-gun fire into the life rafts, sinking two. As American sailors were being massacred, a rescue mission by U.S. Sixth Fleet carrier aircraft was aborted on orders from the White House.

An hour after the attack, Israeli warships and planes returned. Commander McGonagle gave the order to repel boarders, but the Israelis, probably fearing intervention by the Sixth Fleet, departed.

*Liberty* was shattered but defiant, her flag still flying. Israeli attacks killed 34 U.S. seamen and wounded 171 out of a crew of 297, the worst loss of U.S. naval personnel from hostile action since World War II.

Less than an hour after the attack, Israel told Washington its forces had committed a "tragic error." Later, Israel said it had mistaken *Liberty* for an ancient Egyptian horse transport.

U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, and Joint Chiefs of Staff head, Adm. Thomas Moorer, insisted the Israeli attack was deliberate. So did three CIA reports. One assigned Israel's defence minister, Gen. Moshe Dayan, had ordered the attack. The U.S. aircraft crew pro-



**Eric Margolis**  
Foreign Affairs

attack. Reports that the savaging of *Liberty* was deliberate were hushed up by President Lyndon Johnson and Defence Secretary Robert McNamara. The White House and Congress accepted Israel's explanation. Israel later paid a token reparation of US\$6 million.

But surviving *Liberty* crew members would not be silenced. They kept demanding an inquiry and tried to tell their story of a deliberate attack to the media.

Israel's government worked behind the scenes to thwart these efforts, going so far as having pro-Israeli groups accuse *Liberty*'s survivors of being "anti-Semites" and "Israel-haters."

Major TV networks cancelled interviews with the crew. A book about *Liberty* by James Ennes was dropped from distribution.

The attack on *Liberty* faded into obscurity until last week, when intelligence expert James Bamford came out with *Body of Secrets*, his latest book about the National Security Agency. In a stunning revelation, Bamford writes that unknown to Israel, a U.S. Navy EC-121 intelligence aircraft, flying overhead, electronically recorded the attack. The U.S. aircraft crew pro-

vides evidence Israeli pilots knew they were attacking a U.S. Navy ship flying the American flag.

Why try to sink a vessel of a benefactor and ally? Most likely because *Liberty*'s intercepts contradicted Israel's claim, made at the war's start on June 5, that Egypt had attacked Israel, and that Israel's air assault on three Arab nations was in retaliation. In fact, Israel began the war by a devastating, Pearl Harbor-style attack that caught the Arabs in bed and destroyed their air forces.

Washington had warned Israel not to invade Syria, which had remained inactive while Israel fought Egypt. Bamford says Israel's planned offensive against Syria was abruptly postponed when *Liberty* appeared off Sinai, then launched once it was knocked out of action. Israel's claim Syria had attacked first could have been disproved by *Liberty*.

*Liberty*'s intercepts also may have shown Israel seized upon rising Arab-Israeli tensions in May-June, 1967 to launch a long-planned war to invade and annex the West Bank, Jerusalem, Golan and Sinai.

Far more shocking was Washington's response. Writes Bamford: "Despite the overwhelming evidence that Israel attacked the ship and killed American servicemen deliberately, the Johnson adminis-

tration and Congress covered up the entire incident."

Why? Domestic politics: Johnson preferred to cover up the attack rather than anger a key constituency and fiscal backer of the Democrats. Congress was even less eager to touch this "third rail" issue.

Commander McGonagle was quietly awarded the Medal of Honor for his and his men's heroism - not in the White House, but in an obscure ceremony at the Washington Navy Yard. Crew members' graves were inscribed, "Died in the Eastern Mediterranean."

A member of President Johnson's staff believed that Johnson offered Jewish liberals unconditional backing of Israel, and a coverup of the *Liberty* attack, in exchange for liberals toning down their criticism of his policies in Vietnam.

Israel, which claims it fought a war of self-defence in 1967, will be displeased by Bamford's revelations. Those who believe Israel illegally occupies the West Bank and Golan will be emboldened.

More important, the U.S. government's coverup of the premeditated attack on *Liberty* has now burst into the open and demands an investigation. After 34 years, the voices of *Liberty*'s dead and wounded seamen must finally be heard.


Contributing Foreign Editor Margolis appears Sundays.  
E-mail: margolis@foreigncorrespondent.com

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Hail Joseph! Thanks for your letter of 22 OCT 07. Congratulations on pursuing knowledge on behalf of Our Folk. The acquisition of land is good, only if you can defend it. This is impossible under ZOG, so you'd best be mobile & recruit comrades whom you can rely upon. With enough of these, you can capture land & also defend it, as occurs throughout history. I had opportunities to buy land, only to flee the country or be deported, never to return. In Rhodesia, I chose not to buy land, since the traitor, Ian Smith, was going to handover the entire country to Black Marxist Misrule & the Whites did nothing about it. They lost their land, & many lost their lives because they chose to stay, after the country was lost. I have learned over the years to see such things coming, so I don't invest in land, even if I could do so. Knowledge you can take with you, but not land. I warned two Rhodesian friends of mine to get out of the place before it became Zimbabwe, but they loved their land & claimed that "Rhodesian Blacks are different" from all the rest, who'd seized White-owned land after independence from their respective colonial governments. I left under a deportation order, & they remained. Another White wrote me before he left, that both father & son were hacked to bits en route to 'their' farm, but they found enough of them to bury them in separate coffins. Such a deal! So, for a time, my friends will occupy pieces of land 6' X 6' X 3', until the Blacks &/or wild animals dig them up for, er, 'recycling.' No, I would not buy land in the USA, either, as the Chinese are doing. I may need to move suddenly, on short notice. The Mexco-mestizo bandidos will serve my eviction notice in the form of bullets which smash my apartment windows. So far, their gunshots are aimed elsewhere, so I remain in Brownest Yakima. Where I shall go, I don't know, most likely in a ditch by the roadside, where I won't complain. Ha!

The Barnes Review never answers my letters, either, & I'm a paid subscriber, so don't feel left out. Their correspondence is chaotic, & they don't even acknowledge articles I send to them. That's why it's called the blightwing, a well-earned title. That's why I do not have blightwing addresses. I do correspond with a couple who may be willing to send you the information you requested, so I'll forward your request to them, in hopes they may respond.

Please avoid using the term, "White Aryan." In English that means there must be Black Aryans, too. This is called "redundancy," as in "cold ice," which connotes that there is "warm" or even "hot ice." All the best. ORION! 

#### PAULA HITLER

As sister of the man who sacrificed himself for Germany, this I wrote in the beginning of the postwar period:

You gentlemen, do not forget one thing! Your names will eventually join your remains, forgotten and decayed, while the name of Adolf Hitler will always shine and glow! You can not destroy him with your manure buckets, nor can you strangle him with your filthy, ink-spattered fingers. His name shall not be extinguished in one hundred thousand souls. Of that, you yourselves know much, but still too little!

His love was for Germany. His struggle was for Germany. His concern was for Germany. What he enjoyed was also for Germany. And if he fought for honor and respect, it was German honor and German respect, and since he is no longer alive on earth, he gave his life for Germany. What have you given? Who amongst you would give his life for Germany? Always, you have only had power, wealth, pleasure, gluttony and over-indulgence, a luxurious life without responsibility, with no thought for Germany!

Resign yourselves to it, gentlemen: The Leader's pure selflessness in thought and deed suffice to make him immortal! Although Adolf Hitler's determined struggle on behalf of German greatness did not succeed, as did that of Cromwell in Britain, this may have to do with mentality, since the British tend toward conceit, envy, jealousy and ruthlessness, but they never forget they are British, and their loyalty to their Crown runs in their blood. The Germans, however, immerse themselves in their desire for self-importance, but not as Germans.

You tiny souls, together, have achieved nothing, except for the ruin of this entire nation. Your principle will never be: public welfare before personal welfare, but always the reverse. With your principles, would you even wish to hinder a great man's immortality?

What I wrote in the early postwar period is still true in 1957, and it confirms the rightness of my convictions.

Berchtesgaden, May 1, 1957. (Translation by E. Thomson)