

The Naval Institute: *Proceedings*

Friendless Fire?

By David C. Walsh

On 8 June 1967 the electronic intelligence ship [USS Liberty \(AGTR-5\)](#) was on station in international waters 13 miles off the Sinai Peninsula in the eastern Mediterranean. The Arab-Israeli War had wound down, the air was clear, and the seas were light. What happened early that Thursday afternoon is well known. Without warning, a furious attack on the ship commenced from Israeli Mirage and Mystere jets, followed by Ayah-class motor torpedo boats (MTBs). Employed were rockets, napalm, quick-firing 30-mm and 40-mm cannon, .50-caliber machine guns, and torpedoes. Four unshielded .50-caliber machine guns were the Liberty's only defense. The one Israeli torpedo hit of five launched left a yawning 40-foot hole in the hull, devastating the cryptological spaces below decks and killing 25 U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) technicians instantly.

Later, 821 shell holes were counted in the ship's superstructure and hull. A total of 34 men died, with another 172 wounded, many disfigured for life, among the highest peacetime tolls for any noncombatant U.S. Navy vessel and by far the worst single loss to the U.S. intelligence community. It seems a miracle the ship did not go down.^[1]

The Naval Institute

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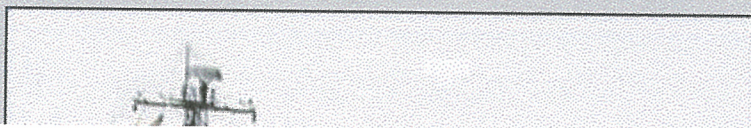
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COURTESY OF LIBERTY VETERANS' ASSOCIATION

Did Israel know the ship it was firing on 36 years ago—here, after the attack, listing from a deadly torpedo hit—was the USS Liberty? Today, top former U.S. intelligence officials are saying "Yes."

Revisiting the Incident

In December 2002, the Naval Historical Center hosted a presentation on the still deeply controversial attack by Federal Judge and retired U.S. Naval Reserve Captain A. Jay Cristol, on a promotional tour for his recent book, *The Liberty Incident: The 1967 Attack on the U.S. Navy Spy Ship*. Based on Judge Cristol's doctoral thesis, the book relies heavily on newly declassified (or newly interpreted) documents and more than 500 interviews with U.S. and Israeli political and military leaders involved in the incident, including former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Admiral Isaac Kidd, and Yitzhak Rabin, who was the Israeli Defense Force Chief of Staff at the time. Only seven of the interviewees, however, were on board the Liberty during the attack. [2]

At the Washington Navy Yard's Education Center, Judge Cristol addressed a full house that included active-duty U.S. Navy personnel and surviving Liberty crew members. He argued that the evidence "in totality" validated Israel's long-standing position: namely, the catastrophe was the bitter fruit of mistaken identity and communications gaffes by both sides. [3] The U.S. government quickly accepted Israel's apology 36 years ago, if not its explanation. [4] Israel also settled death and injury claims, albeit reluctantly. And in 1980, the United States received \$6 million in compensation for the \$40-million intelligence ship.

The Liberty Incident contains considerable, largely Israeli-sourced detail. It also includes a chapter called "Television's Perspective," in which the author surmises that most survivors—some of whom openly criticize Israel's domestic policies and its formidable Washington lobby—have a political ax to grind.

Judge Cristol, with 38 years' naval service, mourns the men's deaths and injuries, and his book honors their courage. But like the Israeli government, the judge is dubious of the nay sayers. They rely on "conjecture, hearsay and plain wishful thinking," flawed or traumatized memories, and "various conspiracy theories," he says. [5]

No Bigots

Such characterizations, along with the linking of Liberty veterans with Arab extremists and racist groups, sit poorly with the ship's crew. Indeed, the Internet Web site of the Liberty Veterans' Association (LVA) makes clear that all bigots' support is unwelcome. [6] The suggestion of prejudice especially upsets Jewish

survivors, such as the senior engineering officer, George Golden, who received the Silver Star for directing heroic efforts to keep the ship afloat. And James Ennes Jr., the LVA historian and spokesman accused in Judge Cristol's book of taking "an irrationally harsh line against Israel," refers to such assertions as "just silly." [7]

Ennes, a retired Navy lieutenant commander, was officer of the deck before being badly wounded early in the attack. He devoted 13 years' research toward his own book, *Assault on the Liberty*. Some half-dozen major-and many minor-disagreements mark the dispute's two main schools: Judge Cristol's "mistaken identity" and Ennes's, the crew's, and several U.S. intelligence professionals' "deliberate attack."

More Inquiries

Since 1967, survivors have pleaded for a more far-reaching government inquiry into the incident. But Judge Cristol argues that another would be a waste of time. Some 13 already have been conducted (five by Congress, one by the U.S. Navy, and several by Israel). And according to Cristol, while typically citing recklessness or inefficiency, all exonerate the Israeli attackers of deliberate intent.

"False!" retorts Ennes. Of the 13 investigations cited by Judge Cristol, Ennes observes, "Most were not investigations. . . . They were merely reports to the boss from advisors . . . (and) mostly summaries and excerpts of the Naval Court of Inquiry report." [8]

Clark Clifford, Chairman of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, drafted one such inquiry. Judge Cristol characterizes Clifford as angry, but finding Israel innocent of murder. Ennes infers darker meanings from the same document.

"Something had gone terribly wrong," Clifford wrote the President, "and then it had been covered up. I never felt the Israelis had made adequate restitution or explanation for their . . . unprovoked actions." Clifford also termed "unbelievable" the explanation that the attack was accidental. The Liberty's spotters, for example, had picked out the MTBs' small hull marks, yet the Israeli attackers claimed never to have seen the U.S. ship's much larger ones. Clifford, an intimate of Johnson's and champion of Israel, urged the attackers be "punished," as did U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, noting there was "every reason to believe that the USS Liberty was identified, or at least her nationality determined . . . one hour before the attack." [9]

But instead of punishing the attackers, Israel honors them in a museum. Told of the display, retired Air Force Major General John Morrison, NSA deputy director for operations at the time, commented, "I am offended by that." And retired Army Lieutenant General William Odom, NSA director from 1985 to 1988, and also unaware of the display, remarked, "I am astonished that Israel should put glory on the people who killed my SigInt-ers [signals intelligence personnel]." [10] The

Liberty's blood-stained flag is exhibited at the National Cryptologic Museum in Fort Meade, Maryland.

Disputed Timelines and Communications

Although Liberty crew members insist the attack lasted about an hour and a quarter, Judge Cristol's book asserts that the Israeli jets and MTBs finished their grisly business in only 22 to 25 minutes. [11]

Ennes recalls being unsettled by the numerous flights over the Liberty by Israeli reconnaissance planes, starting the previous night and continuing for a six-hour period preceding the assault. Trained U.S. Navy observers counted a dozen

overflights. Some were made by a lumbering, Star-of-David-marked Nord Noratlas "flying boxcar," which pulled several times to within mast-clipping range-low enough for any Israeli pilot to see a vessel incapable of harming his country.

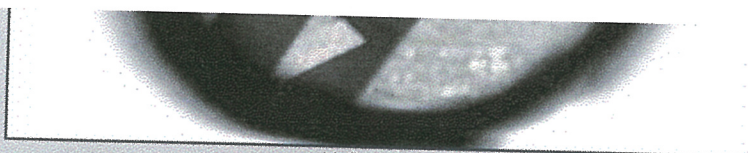
Melvin Smith, senior enlisted intercept chief, reassured Ennes when he overheard the pilots several times identify the flag as U.S. and the ship for what she was. [12] At that time, of course, Israel was a friend. Later, despite jamming of the ship's distress frequencies, and before all her transmitters were shot away, the Liberty's radio operators managed again to hear the attackers make a positive identification in the clear. [13] Judge Cristol, conceding his newly released Israeli transcripts reveal one correct identification, states that they are confusing and mutually contradictory-typical of the "fog of war." [14] Further, citing Ennes, he states that no Hebrew linguists were on board the spy ship, and that Israeli pilots would not have made unencrypted transmissions. [15]

Ennes acknowledges that no "official" Hebrew linguists were on board, but he points out that at least one of the doomed NSA men, Russian/Arabic linguist Allen Blue, understood Hebrew. [16] As for the jamming, Ennes, quoting Chief Radioman Wayne Smith and an article in Proceedings, also notes that the ship could not have been misidentified, because the frequencies jammed were peculiar to the U.S. Navy. Liberty Radioman Richard "Rocky" Sturman also recalls that he and other technicians heard the radio jamming. [17] Judge Cristol rejects such accounts as "myth." [18]

The Flag Issue

Again echoing Israel and citing its reports, Judge Cristol declares that no U.S. flag was visible. He points to film footage of the intact Liberty, taken at an unknown time from a slow-flying helicopter, which reveals no flag. He refers also to gun-camera stills from one of the attacking Israeli jets. These grainy images show billowing smoke "going straight up," indicating the flag was limp. [19] To Judge Cristol, it is therefore unrealistic to think young, inexperienced pilots could have seen any flag, especially at 600 miles per hour. [20]





U.S. NAVY

An Israeli motor torpedo boat passes close alongside the Liberty during the attack.

Ennes, who maintained logs about such details, disagrees. He says that even at the Liberty's slowest steaming speed of 5 knots, the wind put 12 knots across Old Glory and kept it waving. [21] Since the ship was near a combat zone, the crew also was ordered to keep "head's-up" by then-Commander William McGonagle, the ship's captain. Ensuring unfurled colors was a given. And after the normal flag was shot down early on, McGonagle ordered signalmen to hoist the bright new holiday ensign, measuring 7-by-13 feet.

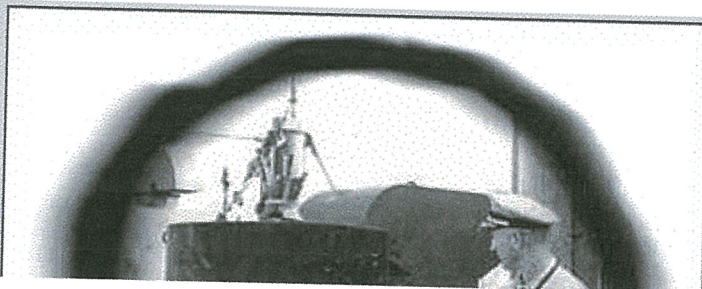
In a January 2003 radio interview, Signalman Joe Meadors described the flag as fluttering each of several times he observed it during the attack. [22] No survivor who glanced toward either flag at this time remembers it otherwise. Regardless, Judge Cristol-whose book offers "pilots' eye view" drawings-insists that even this gaudy parade standard would have appeared "tiny" to high-speed jet pilots.

Retired Navy Commander Tom Schaaf is a combat-tested jet aviator. He attended the Navy Yard lecture, and afterward queried Judge Cristol. Schaaf disbelieves the claimed 600 mile-per-hour speed for the attacking aircraft, adding in a written critique that pilots would have viewed a lot more detail than disclosed in film clips. Post-lecture answers suggest Judge Cristol flew the Navy's slowest propeller aircraft and has not seen combat. "He has no competence to analyze or discuss jet attack tactics," Schaaf concluded. [23]

The El Quseir

Since 1967, Israeli spokesmen have insisted the Israeli pilots had confused the Liberty with the El Quseir, a 1920s-vintage Egyptian horse cavalry transport said to have been in the area. [24] Judge Cristol accepts this. Those same inexperienced airmen unable to notice the ship's flag and unique hull markings, he maintains, easily could have mistaken the Liberty for the Egyptian transport. Indeed, before the attack, Israeli headquarters had wrongly reported that some "enemy vessel" was shelling the coast from near the Liberty's position. [25] To illustrate a resemblance, Cristol pairs the ships in silhouette drawings. He shows them, however, as the same size. (In fact, the El Quesir's length was 275 feet to the Liberty's 455.) [26] Judge Cristol's text notes the actual difference, but opines that in the heat of battle such mistakes are plausible.

The Liberty's crewmen deem insulting the notion that arguably the world's most electronically advanced ship could be confused with one of its most pedestrian vessels. In this, they join Dean Rusk, Clark Clifford, and other senior U.S. officials, as well as author and historian James Bamford, whose NSA history, *Body of Secrets*, devotes a chapter to the Liberty. [27]





U.S. NAVY

The skipper of the ship, Commander William McGonagle, who received the Medal of Honor, surveys the damage.

Principally, the El Quseir lacked the U.S. ship's unique add-ons, which included, both topside, an 18-foot-wide satellite dish nearly as tall as the smokestack and a wading pool-sized microwave dish. The ship bristled, as well, with video capture antennae and other exotica found on no other vessel in the world, much less decrepit Arab transport ships. [28] Ancillary reasons the "deliberate school" rejects Judge Cristol's El Quseir defense are as follows:

- The Egyptian craft
- Flew colors markedly dissimilar to the U.S. flag
- Was one-quarter of the Liberty's tonnage and just nearly half her length
- Had been out of service for many months
- Was waiting to be scrapped in Alexandria
- Was illustrated-along with the Liberty-in Jane's Fighting Ships, to which Israel had access. [29]

In addition, the Egyptian Naval Attache's office in Washington says El Quseir was painted silver, not the Liberty's battleship grey. [30] It is highly unlikely, NSA officials on board and off explain, that Israel's hypervigilant spy agencies would be unacquainted with these facts. [31] This suggests a question: why assault so

concertedly an unthreatening old Egyptian transport (not to say an unarmed U.S. Navy ship) when she could be escorted to Haifa as a war prize (and the U.S. ship signaled to quit the area)?

Attack on the Life Rafts

After the attack, Commander McGonagle, his leg shredded and bleeding, yet still at the conn, gave the "prepare to abandon ship" order. (For his actions that day, he received the Medal of Honor. The award certificate does not mention Israel.) Concurrently, the MTBs circled to within 40 or 50 feet. Then, over a 40-minute span, according to U.S. Navy eyewitnesses, the boats' gunners loosed heavy automatic weapons at stretcher bearers, fire-control teams, and other men still upright on the decks.

The Liberty's motor whale boat had been destroyed, and few life rafts survived. But Lieutenant Lloyd Painter (Ennes's relief as officer of the deck) organized three undamaged ones and kicked them over the gunwales. Two were shot to pieces immediately in the water, the third hauled aboard one of the torpedo boats. [32] At this distance, Ennes emphasizes, the large bow and stern marks on the freshly painted ship were unmistakable. The designator number "5" was 6 1/2 feet high and "GTR," four feet. Her name was in 18-inch lettering, in English. [33]

Judge Cristol quotes Lieutenant Painter's testimony to the naval hearing only on the raft's position, saying [34] He ignores what came next. This not alone, the U.S.

the raft, casting away. [34] He ignores what came next. This act alone, the U.S. sailors charge, proves deliberate intent to destroy a U.S. ship and leave no witnesses. [35] (In 1986, Navy legal expert Lieutenant Commander Walter Jacobsen agreed, arguing in *The Naval Law Review* that it was also a war crime. [36]) Notwithstanding the gravity of these accusations, Judge Cristol leaves aside both the life raft matter and the attack's international legal ramifications. Israel insists that all shooting ceased immediately after the torpedo attack. [37]

Explaining how either ship could have lobbed naval artillery shells 13-plus miles onto the war-wracked Sinai coast, Judge Cristol and the Israeli government again cite "fog of war." They declare that Israeli commanders had confused an exploding ammunition dump near Sharm el Sheikh with a coastal bombardment. [38]

Judge Cristol points out other areas of confusion. For example, the *Liberty* was identified correctly early in the morning, but then the error cycle kicked in anew when the marker was moved from a plotting table in Tel Aviv. *Liberty* spokesmen bristle at such "excuses." Moved markers or no, Israeli intelligence would have charted every ship then in the eastern Mediterranean: Arab, Russian, and U.S. The *Liberty* was the region's only blue-water U.S. Navy vessel.

Weeks after the attack, this "mistaken identity" feature-along with a half-dozen other disparities between the crewmen's and Israel's positions-was outlined for the Legal Advisor's Office by State Department lawyer Carl Salans. [39] As Judge Cristol points out, the Top Secret report (released in 1983) drew no conclusions *per se*. [40] But *Liberty* survivors see its stark comparisons as a refutation of Israel's position. Ennes terms the report "devastating." [41]

Perhaps the widest chasm separating the "mistaken" from the "deliberate" is the Naval Court of Inquiry. Ordered convened a week after the event by Commander-in-Chief Naval Forces Europe, Admiral John McCain, and headed by Rear Admiral Kidd, the hearing is dubbed "remarkably competent (and) thorough" by Judge

Cristol, "a doctored sham" by the veterans. [42] The judge stresses that 14 seamen spoke at the hearing. But ship's officers Ennes, Painter, Golden, and others charge that in dozens of cases, sworn testimony damaging to Israel's case was not allowed or, if allowed, not entered into evidence or made part of the transcript. Thus, Ennes and the LVA charge, the court's Findings of Fact often were unsupported by the evidence, contravening Navy rules of procedure. [43]

Charles Rowley, electronic intelligence specialist and ship's photographer, states that a photo he had made during the attack was seized by the naval court without explanation and marked "Top Secret." It showed the U.S. flag extended. [44] Ennes avers not only that his testimony went unentered but also that deck and weather log entries in his hand were altered. Written observations had correctly mirrored others' to the time he was shot, he recounts, namely: multiple, close preattack overflights by Israeli reconnaissance planes, the attack by unmarked jets, and the U.S. flag standing out continually. [45] Rather than adduce and document facts, former cryptologic technician Joe Lentini stated recently, the naval hearing helped Israel "get away with murder." [46]

Joe Meadors, *Liberty* signalman, observed at the Navy Yard gathering: "The Navy cannot investigate itself." Meanwhile, survivors contest Judge Cristol's statement that "some" had changed their minds after the inquiry, noting that he fails to identify them or crew members he claims agree the attack was an accident. Others also have changed their minds, including Captain Ward Boston, the senior Navy lawyer under pressure to give a peremptory evaluation of the Navy Board of Inquiry. In 2002, Boston dropped a bombshell on Judge Cristol's thesis. He informed *Navy Times* that Israel had knowingly assaulted the *Liberty* and has

worked ever since to "try to get out of it." As surprising, he said, was that the court's president, Rear Admiral Kidd, shared this view, but owing to political pressure from Washington announced the opposite conclusion to the media. "Officers," Boston remarked, "obey orders." Boston explained in the interview that he was speaking now in part because "everyone else is shooting his mouth off." [47]

Judge Cristol could not explain what might have inspired such candor, although he writes that the late Admiral Kidd had told him that the attack was in error. That is the opposite of what Ennes maintains concerning his "many talks" with Admiral Kidd. Ennes also says that Admiral Kidd urged him and his group to keep pressing for an open congressional probe. Meanwhile, Judge Cristol has Boston recanting his Navy Times statements. In reality, Boston stands firmly behind them. [48]

Presidential Recall

When the Liberty's technicians finally found an unjammed frequency, they sent a last desperate message to the Sixth Fleet: "Flash Flash Flash. I pass in the blind." Jet fighters launched from the carriers [USS America \(CVA-66\)](#) and [Saratoga \(CVA-60\)](#). It was too late. Here, a dispute hinges on several related, much-argued elements: how many launches, from which aircraft carrier, and when? But most important, why did the President issue an order recalling the aircraft? Whether some planes had nuclear bombs is hotly debated, too.

Survivors speak of the turn-around orders being radio-telephoned direct from the White House and Defense Secretary McNamara to the carrier group in the Mediterranean Sea. Judge Cristol answers that such "secure" communications were impossible in 1967. This is misleading, the head of the Liberty's 94-man NSA

contingent says. Clear -not secure-voice transmissions were used in the recall order, patched through the Naval Security Group relay station in Morocco. [49]

Otherwise, speculation is rife in this area. Some say President Johnson recalled the planes out of fear the attackers were Russian and a military response could trigger World War III. Others say the President, who at one stage believed Egypt had attacked the Liberty, was prepared to "nuke" Cairo. Still others believe LBJ, on learning the culprits were Israeli, would not retaliate for political reasons.

A final aspect of the Judge Cristol treatise, although not part of the point/counterpoint, has engendered the survivors' special disdain. The judge all but ignores them. Of 500-plus interviews conducted over more than a decade, only seven were with crewmen. [50] "If he spoke to us," says Ennes, "it would blow his thesis out of the water-as the Israelis tried to do with our ship." He adds, "Not a single one of us agrees with Cristol." [51] Judge Cristol replies that survivor/witnesses are not objective. And, unlike Ennes, he "writes history, not memoirs."

None of this may matter, because official support for the crew remains nonexistent. But growing numbers of former senior government and military officials have begun speaking out. Among those in support of the ship's 200-plus survivors, in addition to those mentioned previously and in the accompanying sidebar, are: former Chief of Naval Operations and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Thomas Moorer, then CIA Director Richard Helms, then-NSA Director Marshall Carter, Carter's Deputy Louis Tordella (who wrote on the Israeli Navy's report, "A nice whitewash!"), NSA "Liberty incident" analyst Walter Deeley, and Hayden Peake, professor of intelligence history at the Joint Military Intelligence College and retired CIA officer. [52]

Why, Judge Cristol was asked at the Navy Yard, did his conclusions run so afoul of

such seniors? He answered that although they were respectable men, their contradictions baffled him. In general, he suggests that because theirs are not firsthand knowledge, contrarian officials' statements may, like the survivors', be dismissed. [53]

Judge Cristol is not without his admirers. He counts (besides numerous Israeli officials, Israeli Defense Force officers, and other partisans) former CIA Director Admiral Stansfield Turner and the carrier America's captain, late Vice Admiral Donald Engen. [54] But the supernova in this galaxy is Secretary McNamara. Quoted by Judge Cristol as seeing only "tragic error," McNamara's stock answer when queried by other Liberty researchers is, "I remember nothing about the incident."

Will the Liberty remain a sort of "Flying Dutchman," sailing forever around her poor men's souls? Until survivors get what they call "justice"-that elusive open forum-it seems her restless ghost will do just that.

References

1. Background on the attack is largely from James Ennes Jr., *Assault on the Liberty: The True Story of the Israeli Attack on an American Intelligence Ship* (New York: Random House, 1979, updated version, Gathersburg, MD: Reintree Press Ed., Signature Books, 2002).
2. A. Jay Cristol, *The Liberty Incident: The 1967 Israeli Attack on the U.S. Navy Spy Ship* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, 2002).
3. Cristol lecture, Education Center, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC, 17 February 2002.
4. Ennes, *Assault*, Appendix S.
5. Cristol, *Incident*, pp. 199, 201.
6. Web site: ussliberty.com. Since the Liberty Veterans' Association's founding in 1982, survivors have petitioned Congress and successive administrations to probe the attack, invite them to testify openly on what they witnessed, then publicly release the full text. The government refuses.
7. Cristol, *Incident*, p. 97, and radio interview, Cristol, Ennes, Joe Meadors, Pacifica Radio KPFK, Los Angeles, 29 January 2003.
8. Ennes e-mail to author, 14 February 2003.
9. Clifford Report to the White House, July 1967, and Dean Rusk demarche to Israeli Ambassador Avraham Harman, 10 June 1967, in Ennes, *Assault*, Appendix S. Clifford Report, cited in Cristol, *Incident*, notes, p. 263.
10. Cristol, "The Liberty Incident," Ph.D. diss., University of Miami, 1997, p. 331, photo and caption. The wheel and bell of MTB-203, which launched the fatal torpedo, are displayed in Haifa's Clandestine Immigration and Naval Museum. Interview, MGen. John Morrison, USAF (Ret.), 3 March 2003. Interview, former NSA Director LGen. William Odom, USA (Ret.), 26 March 2003.
11. Cristol, *Incident*, pp. 55, 58.
12. Ennes, e-mail 9 March 2003. CPO Melvin Smith was killed shortly thereafter.
13. Ennes, e-mail, 3 March 2003.
14. Cristol, *Incident*, p. 88. Judge Cristol also writes (p. 181) that the Israelis had "little knowledge" of warships they were not encountering in battle. He says if anything, the U.S. ship more likely would have been (and at one stage was) confused with a Russian electronic intelligence "trawler" (see pp. 49-50). The implications of an Israeli attack on a Soviet vessel in peacetime require no elucidation.
15. Cristol, *Incident*, pp. 25, 109, 118. Ennes, e-mail, 13 March 2003: "Israeli and American pilots routinely broadcast in the clear. I don't believe there was (any) airborne encryption capability in 1967."
16. Ennes, e-mail, 3 March and 9 March 2003. Cristol, *Incident*, p. 137, citing a letter to him from an unnamed NSA Hebrew linguist on board an EC-121 which

James Bamford's NSA history-Body of Secrets: Anatomy of the Ultra-Secret National Security Agency (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2001)-first revealed was circling overhead.

17. Richard Sturman, e-mail, 8 March 2003. See also Ennes, Assault, Addendum, p. 10, and Richard Smith, "The Violation of the Liberty," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, June 1978, note 10. Ennes e-mail, 13 March 2003 also notes that the Naval Court of Inquiry documented the radio frequencies' jamming.

18. Cristol, Incident, p. 43.

19. Cristol, Incident, pp. 73-84.

20. Cristol, Incident, p. 180.

21. Cristol, Incident, p. 75.

22. Interview, Joe Meadors, Pacifica Radio KPFF, Los Angeles, 29 January 2003.

23. Schaaf critique, quoted in Ennes e-mail, 3 February 2003.

24. Cristol, Incident, pp. 54-55, 81.

25. Cristol, Incident, pp. 34-35, 38.

26. Cristol, Incident, p. 154. Two detailed diagrams (pp. 49, 56) show the sun, azimuth references, MTB positions and other indicia, but the Liberty's bow marks are backward, and her stern's are absent altogether.

27. Bamford, Secrets, pp. 185-239.

28. Bamford, Secrets, pp. 176, 207.

29. Ennes, e-mail, 4 March 2003.

30. Unnamed Egyptian officer, 18 February 2003.

31. NSA Deputy Director Oliver Kirby, interview, 18 February 2003. On Israeli intelligence: "They're really good."

32. Ennes, Assault, Addendum (2002), p. 18. Five witnesses "are willing to testify under oath" to this.

33. Ennes, e-mail 3 February 2003.

34. Cristol, Incident, pp. 57, 180. The book notes only that a "damaged" raft was "recovered" by an MTB.

35. Lentini, Painter, et, al., interviews, "Dead in the Water," BBC-4 television documentary, 2001.

36. LCdr. Walter Jacobsen, USN, "A Juridical Examination of the Israeli Attack on the USS Liberty," Naval Law Review, Winter 1986, p. 51. Cristol lecture, 17 Dec. 2002. Answering a question about life raft witness Lt. Lloyd Painter: "It's a new story from 10 years after the attack." He added, "I believe what Painter said in the (naval court) record."

37. Ennes, Assault, p. 158, note 10, quoting Israeli Commission of Inquiry of 16 June 1967, the so-called Ram Ron Report.

38. Cristol, Incident, p. 33.

39. Ennes, Assault, Addendum, p. 14. The report was released in 1983 after a long, expensive court case filed by a Liberty supporter.

40. Cristol, Incident, p. 94.

41. Ennes, Assault, Addendum, p. 14.

42. Cristol, Incident, p. 151, Ennes, e-mail, 3 February 2003.

43. Ennes, Assault, Addendum, p. 8.

44. Ennes, Assault, Addendum, p. 19.

45. Ennes, e-mail, 12 March 2003.

46. Television documentary, "Dead in the Water." No shipmate is known to contest Lentini's view.

47. Navy Times, 26 June 2002. The same article quotes then-CIA Director Richard Helms on 29 May telling the reporter the attack "was no mistake." This directly contradicts Judge Cristol and an agency report from 13 June 1967, backing Israel's mistaken-identity claim.

48. Ennes, e-mail, 21 March 2003. No evidence exists that Boston went public until he talked to Navy Times and no sign of a reversal.

49. Cristol, Incident, p. 98. Interview with LCdr. David Lewis, USN (Ret.), head of the Liberty 105 crew NSA contingent, 28 February 2003. David Lewis's version

the Liberty's 195-man NSA contingent, 28 February 2003. Despite Lewis's senior rank and position, "No one asked me to testify" at the naval hearing. Lewis was among the wounded.

[50.](#) Ennes, e-mail, 3 February 2003. Most of these were perfunctory exchanges at a 1992 veterans' happy hour and not interviews, Ennes points out.

[51.](#) Ennes, e-mail, 3 February 2003.

[52.](#) Bamford, *Secrets*, and Ennes, *Assault*. The skipper had always held his tongue. But besides the "deliberate" remark in 1998 in an oral history (see Bamford, p. 233) a few months before dying in 2001 he asked President George W. Bush to look into the attack. Retired Captain William McGonagle was ignored. Peake quoted in *The Intelligencer*, Summer 2001, that "common sense" ruled out an accident.

[53.](#) Ennes, e-mail, 21 March 2003.

[54.](#) Cristol, *Incident*, book jacket endorsements.

Mr. Walsh is a freelance writer and photographer headquartered in the Washington, D.C., area. He has worked as a consultant on segments concerning the USS Liberty for CBS News's "60 Minutes" and Britain's Thames Television.

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