



# Congressional Record

## FINDINGS OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON THE 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

### Extensions of Remarks

IN RECOGNITION OF ADMIRAL  
THOMAS H. MOORER

**HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 2004

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, on February 5 of this year, a legendary American naval hero passed away in Bethesda, Maryland. Admiral Thomas H. Moorer epitomized the finest qualities of dedication and national service. His distinguished naval career spanned 41 years, including service as a naval aviator, as one of the first pilots off the ground during the attack on Pearl Harbor, as a decorated hero of numerous combat missions in the Southwest Pacific and the Battle of Midway, as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, as commander of NATO's U.S. Atlantic Command and the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, becoming the only officer in the Navy's history to command both our Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, as Chief of Naval Operations, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and as a tireless advocate for American veterans. Admiral Moorer was instrumental in establishing the United States Navy Memorial on Pennsylvania Avenue. In numerous appearances before Congressional Committees, Admiral Moorer provided valuable testimony on a variety of national security concerns.

Capping this extraordinary career, Admiral Moorer made his final appearance on Capitol Hill on October 22, 2003, as Chairman of the Independent Commission of Inquiry into the 1967 attack on the USS *Liberty*. It is a privilege for me to introduce the Findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Into the Israeli Attack on the USS *Liberty* into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

#### FINDINGS OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON THE 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

We, the undersigned, having undertaken an independent investigation of Israel's attack on the USS *Liberty*, including eyewitness testimony from surviving crewmembers, a review of naval and other official records, an examination of official statements by the Israeli and American governments, a study of the conclusions of all previous official inquiries, and a consideration of important

new evidence and recent statements from individuals having direct knowledge of the attack or the cover up, hereby find the following:

1. That on June 8, 1967, after eight hours of aerial surveillance, Israel launched a two-hour air and naval attack against the USS *Liberty*, the world's most sophisticated intelligence ship, inflicting 34 dead and 172 wounded American servicemen (a casualty rate of seventy percent, in a crew of 294);

2. That the Israeli air attack lasted approximately 25 minutes, during which time unmarked Israeli aircraft dropped napalm canisters on the *Liberty's* bridge, and fired 30mm cannons and rockets into our ship, causing 821 holes, more than 100 of which were rocket-size; survivors estimate 30 or more sorties were flown over the ship by a minimum of 12 attacking Israeli planes which were jamming all five American emergency radio channels;

3. That the torpedo boat attack involved not only the firing of torpedoes, but the machine-gunning of the *Liberty's* firefighters and stretcher-bearers as they struggled to save their ship and crew; 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;

4. That there is compelling evidence that Israel's attack was a deliberate attempt to destroy an American ship and kill her entire crew; evidence of such intent is supported by statements from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Undersecretary of State George Ball, former CIA director Richard Helms, former NSA directors Lieutenant General William Odom, USA (Ret.), Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, USN (Ret.), and Marshal Carter; former NSA deputy directors Oliver Kirby and Major General John Morrison, USAF (Ret.); and former Ambassador Dwight Porter, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon in 1967;

5. That in attacking the USS *Liberty*, Israel committed acts of murder against American servicemen and an act of war against the United States;

6. That fearing conflict with Israel, the White House deliberately prevented the U.S. Navy from coming to the defense of the *Liberty* by recalling Sixth Fleet military rescue support while the ship was under attack; evidence of the recall of rescue aircraft is supported by statements of Captain Joe Tully, Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga*, and Rear Admiral Lawrence Geis, the Sixth Fleet carrier division commander, at the time of the attack; never before in American naval history has a rescue mission been cancelled when an American ship was under attack;

7. That although the *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 crewmembers were later threatened with "court-martial, imprisonment or worse" if they exposed the truth; and were abandoned by their own government;

8. 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;

9. 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 crewmember has been permitted to officially and publicly testify about the attack;

10. 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 the *Liberty* attack;

11. 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;

12. 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; this policy, evidenced by the failure to defend the USS *Liberty* and the subsequent official cover-up of the Israeli attack, endangers the safety of Americans and the security of the United States.

Whereupon, we, the undersigned, in order to fulfill our duty to the brave crew of the USS *Liberty* and to all Americans who are asked to serve in our Armed Forces, hereby call upon the Department of the Navy, the Congress of the United States and the American people to immediately take the following actions:

First, That a new Court of Inquiry be convened by the Department of the Navy, operating with Congressional oversight, to take public testimony from surviving crewmembers; and to thoroughly investigate the circumstances of the attack on the USS *Liberty*, with full cooperation from the National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency and the military intelligence services, and to determine Israel's possible motive in launching said attack on a U.S. naval vessel;

**Second.** That every appropriate committee of the Congress of the United States investigate the actions of the White House and Defense Department that prevented the rescue of the USS Liberty, thereafter threatened her surviving officers and men if they exposed the truth, and covered up the true circumstances of the attack from the American people; and

**Third.** That the eighth day of June of every year be proclaimed to be hereafter known as USS Liberty Remembrance Day, in order to commemorate the Liberty's heroic crew; and to educate the American people of the danger to our national security inherent in any passionate attachment of our elected officials for any foreign nation.

**AFFIDAVIT OF CAPTAIN WARD BOSTON, USN, JAG (RET.), SENIOR COUNSEL TO THE U.S. NAVY COURT OF INQUIRY**

For more than 30 years, I have remained silent on the topic of the USS Liberty. I am a military man and when orders come in from the Secretary of Defense and President of the United States, I follow them.

However, recent attempts to rewrite history compel me to share the truth.

In June of 1967, while serving as a Captain in the Judge Advocates General Department of the Navy, I was assigned as senior legal counsel for the Navy's Court of Inquiry into the brutal attack on the USS Liberty, which had occurred on June 8th. The late Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, president of the Court, and I were given only one week to gather evidence for the Navy's official investigation into the attack. Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., then Commander-in-chief, Naval Forces Europe (CINCUSNAVEUR), at his headquarters in London, had charged Admiral Kidd (in a letter dated June 10, 1967) to "inquire into all the pertinent facts and circumstances leading to and connected with the armed attack; damage resulting therefrom; and deaths of and injuries to Naval personnel." Despite the short amount of time we were given, we gathered a vast amount of evidence, including hours of heartbreaking testimony from the young survivors.

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 aware that the ship was American.

I saw the flag, which had visibly identified the ship as American, riddled with bullet holes, and heard testimony that made it clear that the Israelis intended there be no survivors. Not only did the Israelis attack the ship with napalm, gunfire, and missiles, Israeli torpedo boats machine-gunned three lifeboats that had been launched in an attempt by the crew to save the most seriously wounded—a war crime.

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." In particular, the recent publication of Jay Cristol's book, *The Liberty Incident*, twists the facts and misrepresents the views of those of us who investigated the attack. It is Cristol's insidious attempt to whitewash the facts that has pushed me to speak out.

I know from personal conversations I had with Admiral Kidd that President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered him to conclude that the attack was a case of "mistaken identity" despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. 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.

**COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE USS "LIBERTY"**

**1. What happened to the USS Liberty?** The USS Liberty was a virtually unarmed American Navy ship that was attacked by Israeli planes and torpedo boats on June 8, 1967.

**2. What were the American casualties?** 34 American sailors were killed and 172 injured that day, a casualty rate of 70%. This is the highest casualty rate ever inflicted upon a U.S. naval vessel that remained afloat after an attack.

**3. What was Israel's explanation for the attack?** Israel claimed the attack was "a case of mistaken identity"; that they didn't know it was an American ship.

**4. Why would we question that explanation more than 30 years later?** The ship's survivors were afraid to speak out in the early years because of threats of "court martial, prison or worse" if they did not remain silent. However, as time passed, they have stepped forward to say the attack was deliberate.

Recently, high government and military officials have suggested that not only was the attack deliberate, but that the US government covered up the incident. Today, an Independent Commission of Inquiry has found that Israel committed "an act of war" against the United States (see Findings of Independent Commission).

In addition, the Navy's chief attorney to the original 1967 military Court of Inquiry has issued a statement that orders to cover up the incident were issued by President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara [see Statement of Captain Ward Boston, USN, JAG (Ret.)].

**5. Did Israel have reason to believe the USS Liberty was an Egyptian ship?** Israel says its pilots and torpedo boat commanders confused the USS Liberty with the El Quseir, an Egyptian ship allegedly firing upon its forces in the Sinai. But there was no Egyptian naval bombardment that day; nor did the El Quseir (an unarmed 1920s-era horse carrier out of service in Alexandria) bear any resemblance to the Liberty.

**6. Isn't it difficult to identify a ship if you're in an airplane?** In 1967, the USS Liberty was the most sophisticated intelligence ship in the world, with dozens of large antennas, including a large moon-bounce "satellite-dish" mounted on a tall structure near the stern. It may have been one of the most easily identifiable ships of any navy in the world. With a displacement of 10,000 tons, it was four times the size of the antique Egyptian transport it is claimed to have resembled. Freshly painted, the Liberty carried large white identification numbers on its bow. Egyptian hull numbers are painted black.

**7. Doesn't Israel say that the Liberty flew no flag?** According to American survivors, a 5-by-8 feet American flag was hoisted early that morning and was flying all day until it was shot away by attacking aircraft. Within several minutes, it was replaced by the giant 7-by-13 feet holiday ensign, which flew for the duration of the attack.

**8. Could Israel have thought the ship was in a war zone, acting suspiciously?** According to surviving crewmembers, Israeli reconnaissance aircraft closely studied the Liberty over an eight-hour period prior to the attack, one flying within two hundred feet of the ship. At all times the Liberty was a clearly marked American ship in international waters, proceeding at a speed of only 5 knots.

**9. What was the weather like the day of the attack?** Weather reports confirm that it was a clear day with unlimited visibility. The Israeli reconnaissance planes could have seen the Liberty's crew sunbathing on the upper decks just before the attack. The flag was flying in a 12-knot breeze for most of the afternoon.

**10. Doesn't Israel say they ended the attack the minute they saw someone hoist an American flag?** The Israeli attack by combined air and naval forces spanned two hours—as long as the attack on Pearl Harbor. The air attack alone lasted approximately 25 minutes: consisting of more than 30 sorties by approximately 12 separate planes using napalm, cannon, and rockets which left 821 holes in the ship. Following the air attack, three Israeli motor torpedo boats torpedoed the ship, causing a 40 x 40 wide hole in her hull, and machine-gunning firefighters and stretcher-bearers attempting to save their ship and crew. More than 3,000 machine-gun bullet holes were later counted on the Liberty's hull. After the attack was thought to have ended, three life rafts were lowered into the water to rescue the most seriously wounded. The Israeli torpedo boats returned and machine-gunned these life rafts at close range. This was followed by the approach of two large Israeli Army assault helicopters filled with armed commandos carrying what appeared to be explosive satchels (they departed after hovering over the ship for several minutes, making no attempt to communicate).

**11. Did the Liberty send out a distress signal when it was under attack?** Throughout the air attack, the Liberty's radio operators found it difficult to transmit a distress signal because the attacking Israeli aircraft jammed all five of the Liberty's American, not Egyptian, emergency radio channels. However, a call for help did reach the U.S. Navy command in the Mediterranean.

**12. What was the American response time?** Although American carrier-based air support was only 40 minutes away, help did not reach the USS Liberty for seventeen hours. Navy fighters were launched from the aircraft carriers America and Saratoga while the Liberty was under attack. However, they were quickly recalled by the White House. This is the only instance in American naval history where a rescue mission was cancelled when an American ship was under attack.

**13. Why would Israel have deliberately attacked an American ship?** Israel's motive for launching the attack has never been determined with certainty. This is why an impartial investigation is critical. One hypothesis is that Israel intended to sink the ship (with no survivors) and blame Egypt because this might have brought the United States into the 1967 war. Another hypothesis is that the Liberty was gathering intelligence about activities that Israel did not want revealed. Examples might include the massacre of Egyptian prisoners of war that was then occurring in the Sinai, as well as Israel's impending invasion of Syria.

**14. Has the incident been investigated in the past?** Some people say that there have been "thirteen official investigations" all concluding the attack was a case of mistaken identity. Several were conducted by Israel. Upon examination, however, every one is based upon the conclusions of the original 1967 U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry, which accepted the Israeli version, but which has been exposed and discredited by its chief attorney as a cover-up.

**15. Did the surviving crewmembers testify in the other investigations?** In not one of these "investigations" were any of the Liberty's surviving crewmembers permitted to publicly testify.

**16. Why would the White House prevent the rescue of an American ship?** This is, perhaps, the most disturbing question arising out of Israel's attack. It is why there needs to be a thorough investigation of the actions taken by the White House and the Secretary of Defense. Why did they order the recall of the planes that had been sent to rescue the Liberty? Why did they order that the survivors be silenced and the true facts be withheld from the American people?

**17. What kind of investigation are you calling for?** We are calling for a new Court of Inquiry by the Department of the Navy, with congressional oversight, to take public testimony from surviving crewmembers and otherwise thoroughly examine the circumstances of the attack.

**18. Why are you calling for a naval—and not a congressional—investigation?** We believe this would remove the inquiry from the political pressures traditionally exerted by special interest groups upon individual congressional offices. Fundraising and election pressures have prevented an honest investigation from being conducted for the past 36 years.

**19. Why is this significant for the American people 36 years later?** We have a duty to the crew of the USS Liberty, while the survivors are still alive to testify, and while the perpetrators can be brought to justice. Furthermore, any policies that paralyze our elected leadership to the extent they become unable or unwilling to protect Americans and American interests, endangers not only the safety of all Americans but also the national security of the United States.

**20. Doesn't America have a special relationship with Israel?** No nation or people should be above the law; nor should American interests be subordinated to the interests of any foreign nation. Those Israelis responsible for ordering the attack and the resulting murder of American sailors must be held accountable for their actions.

#### THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff**—The distinguished naval career of Admiral Thomas H. Moorer spanned 41 years. Following his Graduation from the Naval Academy in 1933, he became a Navy pilot, a war hero, and a ship's captain. On December 7, 1941, as a

naval aviator, Lieutenant Moorer was one of the first pilots off the ground following the attack on Pearl Harbor. A hero of the Battle of Midway, his numerous decorations for valor during WWII include the Silver Star and Purple Heart. In 1957, Moorer was promoted to the rank of Admiral. In 1965, he broke new ground, becoming the only American admiral to have ever commanded both our Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. He later served as Chief of Naval Operations, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The F-14 Tomcat, the Navy's main fighter for many years, was named for Admiral Moorer. Since his retirement in 1974, Admiral Moorer has served on the boards of many American corporations, and is a tireless advocate for American veterans. Working with Admiral Arleigh Burke (CNO), Admiral Moorer was instrumental in establishing the United States Navy Memorial on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. He is currently Chairman of the Liberty Alliance, an organization dedicated to obtaining an honest investigation of Israel's attack on the USS Liberty and the official cover-up that followed.

**General of Marines Raymond G. Davis (MOH), former Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps**—General Davis, one of America's most decorated heroes, passed away on September 3, 2003. As a combat veteran of three wars and a dedicated member of the Marine Corps for 34 years, General Davis received the Congressional Medal of Honor—the nation's highest award for valor—as well as the Navy Cross, two Distinguished Service Medals, two Silver Stars, two Legion of Merit awards, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart. General Davis was renowned for his exploits in the Pacific during WWII, as a battalion and regimental commander during the Korean War, and as Commanding General of the 3rd Marine Division in Viet Nam. Attaining four-star rank in 1971, Davis served as Assistant Commandant of the Corps before retiring in 1972. A strong proponent of veterans' issues, General Davis served as chairman of the advisory board to the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., dedicated in 1995. Prior to his death, General Davis served as Vice Chairman of the Liberty Alliance and was a principal member of the Commission of Inquiry into the cover-up of the attack on the USS Liberty.

**Rear Admiral Merlin Staring, former Judge Advocate General of the Navy**—Merlin Staring's distinguished naval career, which spanned nearly 25 years, began as an ensign in December 1941. Among his numerous decorations, Admiral Staring was awarded the Navy Distinguished Service Medal. In June of 1967, Staring served as Staff Legal Officer to Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe (CINCSNAVEUR) in London, which encompassed the Mediterranean, and was assigned to review the record of the Navy Court of Inquiry's investigation into the Israeli attack on the USS Liberty. Admiral Staring later served as the Navy's legal advisor to Secretaries of the Navy Paul R. Ignatius and John H. Chafee. Attaining the rank of Rear Admiral in 1972, he was appointed Judge Advocate General of the Navy—the Navy's chief attorney—a position he held through 1975. Currently, Admiral Staring is Treasurer and a director of the Liberty Alliance.

**Ambassador James Akins, former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia**—James Akins served his country for 25 years as a distinguished member of the diplomatic corps. From 1963–1965, he served as an attache at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and later as the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Nixon administration. An internationally respected expert on the Middle East and energy issues, Ambassador Akins has been an active and outspoken proponent for a just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He is a respected and highly sought speaker and analyst on the Middle East peace process as well as Arab politics in general. Author Jean-Jacques Servan Schreiber called Ambassador Akins "the westerner who knows the most about the Middle East and has the closest relationship of trust with its leaders." Ambassador Akins is a director of the Liberty Alliance.

The following footnotes were appended to the original Findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry released October 22, 2003:

[1] Captain Ward Boston, USN, JAGC, Ret, the chief Navy attorney for the 1967 U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry into the Israeli attack, has recently come forward to repudiate the Court's conclusion that the attack was "a case of mistaken identity". Captain Boston has revealed that all available evidence, in fact, pointed in exactly the opposite direction — that it was a deliberate attack on a clearly identified American ship. In his affidavit dated October 9, 2003, Captain Boston states, "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 aware that the ship was American." [See Exhibit attached]. Captain Boston stated that he has personal knowledge that Admiral Kidd found the attack to be "a case of mistaken identity" in 1967 only because he was under direct orders to do so by Defense Secretary McNamara and President Johnson.

[2] Lieutenant Commander David E. Lewis, the Liberty's chief intelligence officer (who was severely wounded in the attack) has reported a conversation with Admiral Lawrence R. Geis, the Sixth Fleet carrier division commander, who visited Lewis after he had been medically evacuated by helicopter to the aircraft carrier USS America. According to Lewis, "He (Admiral Geis) said that he wanted somebody to know that we weren't forgotten...attempts HAD been made to come to our assistance. He said that he had launched a flight of aircraft to come to our assistance, and he had then called Washington. Secretary McNamara came on the line and ordered the recall of the aircraft, which he did. Concurrently he said that since he suspected that they were afraid that there might have been nuclear weapons on board, he reconfigured another flight of aircraft - strictly conventional weaponry - and re-launched it. After the second launch, he again called Washington to let them know what was going on. Again, Secretary McNamara ordered the aircraft recalled. Not understanding why, he requested confirmation of the order; and the next higher in command came on to confirm that...President Johnson...with the instructions that the aircraft were to be returned, that he would not have his allies embarrassed, he didn't care who was killed or what was done to the ship...words to that effect. With that, Admiral Geis swore me to secrecy for his lifetime. I had been silent up until I found out from Admiral Moorer that Admiral Geis had passed away" [transcript from NBC's Liberty Story, aired on national television 1/27/92]. This statement by Commander Lewis has recently been corroborated by Tony Hart, a Navy communications technician stationed at the U.S. Navy Base in Morocco in June, 1967. Mr. Hart connected the telephone conversation between Secretary McNamara and Admiral Geis and stayed on the line to keep them connected. Hart has been recorded as saying that he overheard Admiral Geis refusing McNamara's order to recall the Sixth Fleet rescue aircraft while the ship was under attack. Mr. Hart reported that McNamara responded, "we are not going to war over a bunch of dead sailors."

[3] New evidence of intercepted radio communications between attacking Israeli pilots and the Israeli War Room, recorded by a U.S. Navy EC-121 spy plane, in which the Israeli pilots report seeing the Liberty's American flag flying, has been collected by investigative author James Bamford - for 9 years the Washington Investigative Producer for ABC's World News Tonight with Peter Jennings (and author of Body of Secrets, which includes a chapter entitled Blood about the attack on the Liberty). A similar radio message was intercepted by the EC-121 from the Israeli motor torpedo boats. This corroborates statements by surviving crewmembers, by Ambassador Dwight Porter, and by senior National Security Agency officials concerning NSA intercepts of Israeli pilot communications identifying the ship as American.

## Israeli attack on U.S. Navy ship led to cover-up

By ADMIRAL THOMAS H. MOORER

Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Founding Chairman, USS Liberty Alliance

After State Department officials and historians assembled in Washington, D.C., last week to discuss the 1967 war in the Middle East, I am compelled to speak out about one of U.S. history's most shocking cover-ups. On June 8, 1967, Israel attacked our proud naval ship – the *USS Liberty* – killing 34 American servicemen and wounding 172. Those men were then betrayed and left to die by our own government. U.S. military rescue aircraft were recalled, not once, but twice, through direct intervention by the Johnson administration. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's cancellation of the Navy's attempt to rescue the *Liberty*, which I personally confirmed from the commanders of the aircraft carriers *America* and *Saratoga*, was the most disgraceful act I witnessed in my entire military career.

To add insult to injury, Congress, to this day, has failed to hold formal hearings on Israel's attack on this American ship. No official investigation of Israel's attack has ever permitted the testimony of surviving crewmembers. A 1967 investigation by the Navy, upon which all other reports are based, has now been fully discredited as a cover-up by its senior attorney. Capt. Ward Boston, in a sworn affidavit, recently revealed that the Court was ordered by the White House to cover up the incident and find that Israel's attack was "a case of mistaken identity".

Some distinguished colleagues and I formed an independent commission to investigate the attack on the *USS Liberty*. After an exhaustive review of previous reports, naval and other military records, including eyewitness testimony from survivors, we recently presented our findings on Capitol Hill. They include:

- Israeli reconnaissance aircraft closely studied the *Liberty* during an eight-hour period prior to the attack, one flying within 200 feet of the ship. Weather reports confirm the day was clear with unlimited visibility. The *Liberty* was a clearly marked American ship in international waters, flying an American flag and carrying large U.S. Navy hull letters and numbers on its bow.
- Despite claims by Israeli intelligence that they confused the *Liberty* with a small Egyptian transport, the *Liberty* was conspicuously different from any vessel in the Egyptian navy. It was the most sophisticated intelligence ship in the world in 1967. With its massive radio antennae, including a large satellite dish, it looked like a large lobster and was one of the most easily identifiable ships afloat.
- Israel attempted to prevent the *Liberty's* radio operators from sending a call for help by jamming American emergency radio channels.
- Israeli torpedo boats machine-gunned lifeboats at close range that had been lowered to rescue the most seriously wounded.

As a result, our commission concluded that:

- There is compelling evidence that Israel's attack was a deliberate attempt to destroy an American ship and kill her entire crew.
- In attacking the *USS Liberty*, Israel committed acts of murder against U.S. servicemen and an act of war against the United States.
- The White House knowingly covered up the facts of this attack from the American people.
- The truth continues to be concealed to the present day in what can only be termed a national disgrace.

What was Israel's motive in launching this attack? Congress must address this question with full cooperation from the National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency and the military intelligence services.

The men of the *USS Liberty* represented the United States. They were attacked for two hours, causing 70 percent American casualties, and the eventual loss of our best intelligence ship. These sailors and Marines were entitled to our best defense. We gave them no defense.

Did our government put Israel's interests ahead of our own? If so, why? Does our government continue to subordinate American interests to Israeli interests? These are important questions that should be investigated by an independent, fully empowered commission of the American government. The American people deserve to know the truth about this attack. We must finally shed some light on one of the blackest pages in American naval history. It is a duty we owe not only to the brave men of the *USS Liberty*, but to every man and woman who is asked to wear the uniform of the United States.

Following the briefing by the Independent Commission on October 22, 2003, Admiral Moorer invited those in attendance to view the first Capitol Hill screening of the Commission's documentary, "The Loss of Liberty".

Additional copies of the Findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry, together with copies of "The Loss of Liberty" video, may be obtained from the Independent Commission of Inquiry c/o USS Liberty Alliance, P.O. Box 663, Front Royal, VA 22630