



CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
CHARTERED BY THE CONGRESS

FROM THE DESK OF:

CAPTAIN WILLIAM L. Mc GONAGLE, USN (RET.)
MEMBER, CMOH SOCIETY

October 24, 1998

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON

Re: Jonathan POLLARD

1. Please DO NOT release Jonathan POLLARD, a convicted traitor of the United States, to the Government of Israel, as part of the Middle East peace process, or for any other reason.
2. Please DO NOT release Jonathan POLLARD to the Government of Israel where he could continue to cause irreparable security harm to the United States of America.
3. Please DO NOT release Jonathan POLLARD to the Government of Israel until and unless the Government of Israel acknowledges, in writing and publicly, that the Government of Israel armed forces (air and naval) deliberately attack USS LIBERTY (AGTR-5) (A Technical Research Ship) on June 8, 1967.

Israeli aircraft conducted surveillance of the ship within moments of our arrival on station off the coast of the Sinai on the morning of June 8, 1967. The ship was soon identified as USS LIBERTY by Israeli Naval Headquarters, by referring to "JANE'S FIGHTING SHIPS" 1966 or 1967 issue, which showed a photograph of the ship and listed in detail its characteristics. In fact, an identification "tower" was placed on their Battle Plot with an "A" on the tower to identify the ship as an American ship. The plot was not kept up to date, and was removed when the watch changed at noon that day. The ship was overflown on several occasions before the attack commenced. An Israeli Naval Officer went to the American Embassy Naval Attaché to obtain information that the ship was indeed USS LIBERTY, but the US Naval Attaché did not have our operating schedule, so he could neither confirm or deny that the ship was the USS LIBERTY.

When the attack began about 2:00 p.m. (local time) the ship was subjected to relentless and repeated murderous fire from the attacking aircraft (which were unmarked - a violation of international law). The gun crews of the two (2) bow .50 cal. machine guns were killed during the initial strike on the ship. We could not man the starboard bridge level .50 cal. machine gun, because our life boat was burning one (1) deck below and the heat did not allow anyone to approach the gun. We could not man the port bridge level .50 cal. machine gun, because two (2) 55 gallon gasoline drums were burning furiously one (1) deck below. Again the heat of the flames prevented anyone from approaching the gun. **WE WERE DEFENSELESS** against the onslaught of eight (8) or more firing passes by at least four (4) aircraft, and the strafing and launching of five (5) torpedoes by three (3) motor torpedo boats. That a larger number of casualties was not report is a tribute to the fighting spirit to the officers, crew, civilians, and Marines, when they had nothing to defend themselves with, during our awesome hours of peril.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

USS LIBERTY (AGTR-5), a Technical Research ship was sailing legally and peacefully, in international waters in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, twelve and one-half (12.5) nautical miles from the nearest land off the coast of the Sinai, during the Arab-Israeli SIX Day war, when it was attacked, without warning or provocation, by four (4) unidentified jet fighter aircraft, firing rockets, machine guns, and napalm. The ship was then strafed and torpedoed by three (3) Israeli motor torpedo boats. One (1) torpedo exploded in the Research spaces of the ship, where it caused the majority of the fatalities. The Government of Israel shortly after the attack acknowledged that their armed forces conducted the assault. The apology for the attack was accepted, but the reason for the attack as "misidentification" was never accepted by the US government.

Thirty-four (34) officers, sailors, a civilian, and a US Marine were killed or died of their wounds as a result of the attack. One hundred seventy one (171) additional crew members received wounds as a result of the attack. The Government of Israel did compensate the families of those killed, the individual's that were wounded, and eventually paid reparations for the damage done to the ship and its equipment.

The ship remained afloat, in spite of the extensive hull damage from the torpedo explosion, and after hull repairs in Malta, the ship returned to Little Creek, VA, apparently to avoid undue publicity that the ship probably would have received had it returned to its home port of Norfolk, VA. No high level Executive Branch members welcomed the ship home to the USA, as was the practice in later years, such as the Battleship IOWA, and other incidence.

Except for a few high ranking naval officers, no one has felt our pain of not knowing exactly why the ship was attack. Over thirty-one (31) years after the attack, the crew is entitled to know the details concerning the attack by the Government of Israel and also the details of the role the U.S. Government in the entire affair. Why were our aircraft recalled to their carriers on two (2) occasions before they reached our location to assess the situation. and what official ordered the recall after "Hot Line" communication was established with Moscow to alert Nasser that the planes were being send to see what the condition of USS LIBERTY was. None of the planes ever reached our location. For over seventeen (17) hours we received no assistance from US forces in the Mediterranean.

This is the only US Navy ship attack, by a foreign nation, involving a large loss of life and so many personnel injured that has never been accorded a full Congressional hearing.

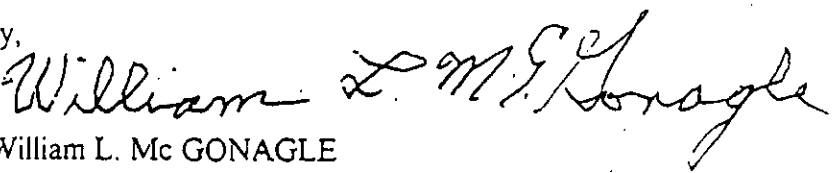
About a year after the attack, USS LIBERTY was dismantled and scrapped.

The ship was awarded the Combat Action ribbon, and the Presidential Unit Citation, and many crew members received individual combat awards (Navy Cross (two (2) posthumously), Silver Star, Bronze Star, etc.).

I was the Commanding Officer, USS LIBERTY (AGTR-5) at the time of the attack, and was presented the Medal of Honor, by the Secretary of the Navy, at the Navy Yard on June 11, 1968, for my performance of duty during the attack and post-attack recovery period.

4. Please DO NOT delay release of Jonathan POLLARD, until after the elections on November 3, 1998, if it is your intention to release him, with or without due consultation with US military and security experts. If you are going to release him in any case, please let the people know of your intentions and executive action before they vote in the upcoming elections.

Very respectfully,


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