

## The USS *Liberty* and the Role of Intelligence

©2004

Captain A. Jay Cristol, USNR (Ret)

Captain Ernest Castle, USN (Ret)

John Hadden, CIA (Ret)

This paper was prepared in response to Announcement 134863, inviting proposals for original papers to be presented at the United States Department of State at a conference on the Arab-Israeli crises and war of 1967 on topics relating to the pre-war regional crises, the war itself, and the immediate post-war impact, to coincide with the declassification and release of the Department of State's historical series, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume XIX, The Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967*, covering the period from May 15, 1967 through November 22, 1967.

The paper is based on research and personal investigation of A. Jay Cristol compiled in the preparation of the book *The Liberty Incident* (Brassey's Military 2002) plus the anecdotal recollections of two Americans who were in Israel in official capacities on June 8, 1967.

The main message of this paper is that the *Liberty* tragedy was the outcome of blunders by both the American and Israeli intelligence services which led to action by the Israeli military. The incident is still kept alive almost forty years later by individuals and organizations whose hidden agenda is actually to damage U.S./Israel relations. One would have hoped that those mistakes are being taught in military schools today in order to avert similar blunders in the future. Unfortunately various individuals and organizations who have their own agendas concoct conspiracy theories which, instead of helping to understand the series of innocent mistakes, are circulated to force myth upon reality, thereby seriously impairing the learning of lessons which are essential to hopefully preventing similar tragedies in the future.

Commander (later Captain) Ernest Castle, the United States Naval Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv in June 1967, received the first report of the attack from Israel and advised the White House, the Sixth Fleet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and other addressees by his flash message of 08 1414Z Jun 67 (1614 Sinai Time) [U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry, Exhibit 48, Document 75]. Commander Castle was the first U.S. Naval officer to reach the USS *Liberty* (AGTR-5) a few hours after the attack, in an effort to assist. He

also participated in the gathering of information about the incident for the U.S. Navy and the Embassy.

John Hadden was the declared Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Chief of Station at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv in 1967. He was also deeply involved in the collection and analysis of both overt and covert information and intelligence about the incident.

This paper explores 1) the 1967 Middle East crisis; 2) the need of the United States for intelligence; 3) the various sources of intelligence available; 4) the failures of both U.S. intelligence and Israeli intelligence services that might have prevented the tragedy; 5) the lessons that should have been learned; and 6) how distorted explanations of events obfuscate the picture and make it exceedingly difficult to learn real lessons for the future.

### **The Crisis and the Need for Intelligence**

In the spring of 1967, a crisis was brewing in the Middle East. As it reached its peak it was exacerbated by President Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt when on May 18, 1967 he ordered the UNEF forces, that had stabilized the Sinai Peninsula for a decade, to withdraw. Then he announced the closure of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping, an act which had been agreed upon by Israel and the United States as a *casus belli* following the 1956 Suez armed conflict. (On that same day, the Soviet government gave notice required under the Montreaux Convention that ten Soviet warships would transit from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles into the Mediterranean. The prior day the JCS had positioned the U.S. Sixth Fleet more than 300 miles from the potential combat zone.) A U.S.-Soviet confrontation which might escalate into a war was becoming more possible and the United States wished to avoid war or armed conflict with the Soviets. The Soviets also wished to avoid war but were inclined to use the crisis to improve their relationship with a number of Arab nations.

According to then Undersecretary of State for Near East Affairs, Eugene V. Rostow, (interviewed April 29, 1992), President Nasser was fully aware that the closure was considered a *casus belli* by both the United States and Israel. His brother, National Security Advisor, Walt W. Rostow, stated in an interview on March 7, 1990 that Ephriam Evron brought this promise by President Eisenhower to President Johnson's attention. Specifically he mentioned an aide-memoire from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles dated February 11, 1957. President Johnson

instructed Walt Rostow to confirm Evron's claim. He said that Johnson was concerned over whether the U.S. had made a guarantee to Israel in 1957 as a condition of Israel pulling out of the Sinai. Walt Rostow said that Johnson had a good relationship with Eisenhower which he maintained through Andy Goodpaster (General Andrew Goodpaster). On Johnson's instruction Walt Rostow asked Goodpaster to find out from "Ike" if such a deal with Israel had been made. Word came back, "It was a deal." Although Johnson felt bound by the deal, he asked Israel Foreign Minister Abba Eban to give him two weeks. In light of the assurance of the "deal" Israel Prime Minister Eshkol said "Okay - two weeks."

It has been the opinion of this author that President Nasser was playing a dangerous game of brinkmanship which culminated in the misjudgment of the situation that resulted in his falling over the brink although perhaps John Hadden, in his analysis (see Appendix II), is correct and Nasser stepped over the brink knowingly and intentionally. The big powers in the game were the United States and the Soviet Union. The local players in the Middle East on the Arab side were Egypt, Jordan and Syria opposed by Israel. Each country made decisions affecting all of the others based on their evaluation of the factual situation as they understood it. Each country analyzed the information gleaned from both direct communication and intelligence.

Intelligence analysis is more of an art than a science and on some occasions full complete valid data is analyzed as unreliable while in other cases inaccurate data is persuasive and believed. Faulty analysis may result in catastrophe.

Overt intelligence, information that is not a nation's secret and is available for observation by anyone, or information which may be a nation's secret but is shared by that nation with another friendly nation, is usually not considered adequate for strategic national decision-making. The problem for a nation's decision-makers is the possibility, in some cases the probability that the information is incomplete or incorrect. How does a nation deal with this dilemma? President Ronald Reagan perhaps said it best, "Trust, but verify." How does a nation verify?

A primary method of verification is covert intelligence. When on March 28, 1991 this author interviewed Dr. Harold Saunders, who in 1967 was a senior staff member of the National Security Council responsible for the Near East and South Asia, Saunders was asked, "In 1967,

Israel was providing the United States with a flow of information on the situation. Why was it necessary to also obtain covert intelligence?” He replied, in essence: “The United States is a great nation, it cannot afford to rely on information received, even from friends, it must verify the information.”

Both President Reagan and Dr. Saunders are correct. Nations have national interests and when disclosure of information might adversely effect that national interest, even friendly nations may be expected not to disclose or not to fully disclose or even to provide incorrect information. Thus, proceeding to make decisions without obtaining whatever covert intelligence might be obtainable is not prudent.

Thus, any nation involved in a serious international situation feels the need to obtain and evaluate as much intelligence as it is able to obtain. While the need for covert intelligence is irrefutable, the apparatus of covert intelligence gathering is fraught with danger and paranoia. Covert intelligence operatives take great risks, sometimes ending in their death or disappearance, and tragically these risks are sometimes exacerbated by the paranoia inherent in the system. A classic tragic example is the *Liberty* incident of June 8, 1967.

### **State Department Intelligence**

Thomas L. Hughes was the Director of the United States Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research in June 1967. He confirmed to this author in an interview on April 30, 1991 that the Department of State had no knowledge of the presence or activity of *Liberty* or other U.S. ship activity in the combat zone. Ambassador Richard Parker, who was political counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo in June 1967, indicated that normally the Department of State was asked to clear a mission like the *Liberty's* mission and State would check with the appropriate embassy before the mission was approved. Ambassador Parker does not recall the embassy in Cairo signing off on the *Liberty* mission. Regarding the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, neither Deputy Chief of Mission William Dale (with whom I spoke on November 24, 2003), Captain Castle, the U.S. Naval Attaché, nor John Hadden, the CIA Chief of Station, recall any advance inquiry about or notice of the *Liberty* mission. They also had no recollection of being advised of a similar mission by the USNS *Private Joseph P. Valdez* (T-AG-169), conducted by the National Security Agency (NSA) off the coasts of Egypt, Israel and Lebanon during April

1967. Director Hughes stressed that there was no State Department involvement in the operation of the *Liberty* or its June 1967 mission which was strictly handled at the level of the Department of Defense.

According to Ambassador Parker (*The Politics of Miscalculation*, Indiana University Press, 1993) a letter from President Johnson to President Nasser offering to send Vice President Hubert Humphry to Cairo was delivered by Ambassador-designate Richard Nolte to Foreign Minister Mahammoud Riad at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry on May 23, 1967. There was no response from the Egyptians until May 31 or June 1 as reported by a telegram sent from Lisbon by Robert Anderson, a former Secretary of the Treasury and friend of President Johnson. In the telegram Anderson reported meeting with Nasser and being told that Vice President Humphry would be welcome and that Nasser proposed sending Vice President Zacharia Muhieddin to Washington.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk sent retired Ambassador Charles Yost to Egypt on a mission similar to the Anderson mission. Yost had been a colleague of Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahammoud Riad when they both had served as ambassadors at the United Nations and at Damascus. Ambassador-designate Nolte was scheduled to present his credentials to President Nasser on June 5, 1967. Secretary Rusk correctly believed that time was of the essence and communication could not wait until June 5. Yost arrived in Cairo on June 1 and on June 2 he contacted Riad and told him the U.S. was ready to receive Egyptian Vice President Zacharia Muhieddin in Washington. Riad telephoned Nasser and a meeting was set in Washington for June 7, 1967.

That meeting was overcome by events and never took place. Secretary Rusk told this author that he was certain that the crisis would have been solved at that meeting and that one of the biggest disappointments of his career as Secretary of State was the fact that the war started before he could have brought the parties together on June 7, and prevented it.

#### **Other Overt Intelligence Resources in the Area**

The United States had the potential for listening from the various embassies located in the region. The U.S. also maintained military communication stations with some listening capability in Crete, Greece, Cyprus, Asmara Ethiopia, and in North Africa. Also the Sixth Fleet

had certain limited listening capability from its position at sea in the Mediterranean. This listening ability was ordered supplemented on May 23, 1967 when the NSA requested the JCS to move the *Liberty* to a position off Port Said, Egypt. After war began on June 5, the listening was further supplemented by the NSA sending a Navy EC-121 and an Air Force C-130 to Athens. These aircraft flew alternating missions over the eastern Mediterranean where they could intercept radio and radar transmissions from the combat zone.

### **Covert Intelligence Resources in the Area**

First, it is a certainty that the U.S. through the CIA, had human intelligence sources (HUMINT) in the form of agents and informers throughout the Middle East. Reports from these sources were generally not real time information and required evaluation and analysis.

In April 1967, the 303 Committee<sup>1</sup> approved a covert operation which apparently would have one or more U.S. submarines within United Arab Republic (Egyptian) territorial waters. What could a submerged submarine accomplish regarding gathering intelligence? This author's conjecture is it could operate at periscope depth with high frequency, VHF/UHF and other antennas projecting above the surface, and intercept high frequency (HF) radio transmissions from ground stations in Egypt, VHF/UHF transmissions from coastal airports within twenty miles more or less, and VHF/UHF transmissions from airborne aircraft from greater distances, plus electromagnetic transmissions of some radar and ECM sources.

What could a submarine do with such intercepts in real time? If they were in Arabic or Russian, and the submarine had a linguist aboard, they could be translated and if deemed significant, transmitted by squirt or other transmission to the Sixth Fleet, to U.S. military communication stations ashore, or even possibly to the *Liberty* for further transmissions to the United States. Today, a submarine can transmit to a satellite and then instantly to Washington, providing real time information, but that technology was not available in 1967.

Unconfirmed information indicates that the submarine *Amberjack* (SS-522) operated off the coast of Egypt during part of the 1967 war. An NSA-assigned Chief Petty Officer, Wendell

---

<sup>1</sup>. On June 2, 1964 then National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy issued National Security Memorandum No. 303 changing the name of Special Group 5412 to "the 303 Committee". This group or committee was established on December 28, 1955 with the task of overseeing covert U.S. intelligence operations. It is interesting to note that there is no available record of the 303 Committee being involved in connection with the USS *Liberty*.

Switzer, qualified as an Arabic/Russian linguist, was on board on temporary additional duty (TAD) orders from NSA Division 333 at Rota, Spain. Much of the radio intercept material would be in the nature of overt rather than covert collection of military transmissions.

According to Switzer the *Amberjack* processed, analyzed and stored signal intercepts and made no attempt to send back intelligence data in order to avoid compromise of the mission.

If Chief Switzer's statement is accurate, then no real time intelligence was available from the submarine *Amberjack*. This is plausible because when both *Amberjack* and *Liberty* were first ordered to the eastern Mediterranean, the 1967 war had not started and the need for real time information was not as urgent as it became later.

Could the *Amberjack* or other covert submarines have been relaying their intercepts home via the *Liberty*? It is possible but quite doubtful. This apparent covert submarine operation by *Amberjack* began on May 15, a month before the *Liberty* arrived on the scene on the morning of June 8, 1967. *Liberty* was only there for a little over six hours and departed the area before sundown on that day. It does not seem reasonable to link the *Amberjack* and *Liberty* missions. *Liberty* at times was precluded from transmitting to avoid interference with its intercepts. It seems more logical that submarine transmissions of significant intelligence could have taken a more direct and faster route. Perhaps if *Amberjack* had intercepted intelligence deemed important it could have moved out to sea, away from the coast of Egypt, and safely transmitted from that position, but there is no information indicating that such transmissions took place and Chief Petty Officer Switzer says they did not. The concept that important intelligence would be transmitted to *Liberty* for retransmission to NSA is not logical.

Like the *Amberjack*, the *Liberty* was ordered to the eastern Mediterranean weeks before the war broke out. On the third day of the war *Liberty* was ordered out of the combat area by multiple mis-sent orders which were either never received or not received in time.

It is interesting to note that when Walter Deeley, of the National Security Agency, was interviewed by Adrian Pennink of Thames Television in 1986, and asked "Could the State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv not know about the assignment of the USS *Liberty* to her position off the Sinai?" Mr. Deeley responded, "Why should we tell them?" He amplified this remark in a letter to Pennink dated September 2, 1986, "There would have been no

reason to inform the embassy since she was sent to the area prior to hostilities, was a non-belligerent, and had every right to be where she was.” Deeley’s comment might have been plausible if made in May of 1967 before the war began and could be viewed as standard operating procedure for an intelligence operation. However, when made in late 1986, with hindsight knowledge of the change in the situation, the start of the war and the fact that NSA perceived danger to the *Liberty*, it can only be viewed as less than prudent. “Why should we?” Under the changed circumstances it may have prevented the tragedy even if it degraded the original mission. But then hindsight is always more accurate than predictions of the future.

### **U.S. Intelligence Sources in Israel**

Overt intelligence was available through the U.S. Ambassador Walworth Barbour at the U.S. Embassy, Tel Aviv. There was direct communication between governments both through the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Israel Embassy in Washington up to a point. In an interview on May 23, 1989 Secretary of State Dean Rusk told me that the Eshkol government kept him fully informed during the crisis. (Of course that did not include advance notice of the early morning June 5, 1967 air strikes.)

The U.S. Defense Attaché and Air Force Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, Air Force Colonel Anthony Perna, had a personal relationship with the Chief of the Israel Air Force Intelligence, Lt. Col. (later Brigadier General) Yeshayahu Bareket. Colonel Perna sent a message to the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Department of State and others (Message 0834, U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry, Document 64 of Exhibit 48) describing a report of IDF forces being shelled from the sea in the Gaza area on June 7, 1967. This was the day before the attack on the *Liberty* and very near the point at which *Liberty* arrived at 0849 on June 8, 1967. According to Gen. Bareket, he called Col. Perna after the attack on the *Liberty* to advise him about the attack and to personally apologize.

The U.S. Naval Attaché (ALUSNA), Commander Ernest Castle, spoke Hebrew and was a skilled intelligence officer. Commander Castle, who earned a Silver Star during the Korean conflict, was a rising star in the intelligence community. A director of naval intelligence who served with him described him as having the keenest mind of any intelligence officer he ever met. Years later he was on the short list for selection as Director of Naval Intelligence. His

recollections of his duty at the U.S. Embassy at Tel Aviv are presented in Appendix I. Commander Castle had a good relationship and was in constant communication with Israeli Foreign Officer Liaison, Lt. Col. Michael Bloch and others. Castle worked closely with Bloch for weeks following the *Liberty* incident passing questions about the incident to his Israeli counterparts and relaying responses to CNO, Defense Intelligence Agency and other interested addressees. He recalls that until June 8, 1967 all of the Israeli military with whom he dealt were always composed, confident and self-assured. He observed the obvious total distress and loss of composure of his counterparts when they informed him of the attack and found some very persuasive of the notion that they were both shocked and surprised by the event.

The CIA had interface with Israeli Mossad through its declared Chief of Station, John Hadden. He had both overt and covert sources of information. He was fluent in Hebrew. After his tenure in Tel Aviv, he returned to CIA headquarters where he headed the Israel desk and the Middle East desk. The recollections of John Hadden, the Chief of Station in Tel Aviv in 1967 are presented in Appendix II. From John Hadden's perspective, President Nasser did not blunder over the brink but knowingly stepped over because other factors in his world made that step unavoidable even though he knew the consequences.

### **The U.S. Intelligence Blunders**

The first U.S. intelligence blunder was to send the *Liberty* on her mission to within sight of the Sinai coast. Frank Raven at the NSA reportedly argued against it, but was overruled. The second blunder occurred on June 5, 1967 when war broke out and the *Liberty* was allowed to continue sailing to the coast of the Sinai, to a patrol route located in an elbow of the Mediterranean where major military air traffic from Israel to Egypt and Egypt to Israel was constantly flying overhead. This blunder snowballed until finally late on June 7, 1967, the JCS began to send messages ordering the *Liberty* to stand-off the combat zone. Five messages were mis-sent, and none arrived prior to the attack. (See House Armed Services Investigating Subcommittee, "Review of Department of Defense Worldwide Communications," May 10, 1971.)

(There was another order directing *Liberty* to move her eastern most point of patrol sixty nautical miles further west, but that order was never transmitted.)

When command and control should have known that the stand-off orders had not been received, the option remained to advise Israel that a U.S. ship was in the combat zone. Unfortunately the culture of the intelligence community did not permit that action, which might have prevented the tragedy. That same culture and the paranoia for secrecy kept the NSA from fully briefing the *Liberty's* commanding officer of the ship's mission. Thus he stayed in harm's way when both the JCS and NSA no longer wanted him there and failed to exercise his command discretion to withdraw because he was not aware that the mission had been overcome by events and no longer required the ship's presence.

### **The Israeli Intelligence Blunders**

As the *Liberty* approached Sinai at about 6:00 a.m. local time on June 8, 1967 she was observed by the Israeli morning reconnaissance flight and identified as a U.S. ship and later by naval intelligence officers specifically as GTR-5, the USS *Liberty*. This later information was passed to naval intelligence in Haifa together with a specific caveat by an Israeli intelligence officer, "The ship looks something like the Egyptian El Quseir - don't mix them up."

Israeli naval intelligence blundered in not alerting Navy operational command and control and Air Force control at the Kirya in Tel Aviv. Further, direct dissemination of that information might have averted the tragedy.

### **The Intelligence Failures**

The mission of the *Liberty* was an intelligence operation on behalf of the United States. Israeli intelligence services were not involved in the attack. (The initial sighting and identification of a U.S. ship by the morning naval reconnaissance flight was made at about 0600 AM Sinai Time. The *Liberty* was observed sailing on a southeasterly heading of 123° and then turning south to 190° at a speed of 10 knots. She was out to sea far over the horizon about 33 nautical miles from nearest land. This information was passed to Israeli naval intelligence with the correct identification as *Liberty*, where the data languished.) The events which triggered the attack occurred many hours later in the Sinai. The attack (which commenced about 2:00 p.m. Sinai time) was ordered and controlled at a tactical or operational level against a ship sailing west 283° at 5 knots which had been inaccurately reported as firing on the IDF positions from a point where, on the day before, an Egyptian ship was reported shelling IDF positions ashore.

The major U.S. intelligence failures were 1) not maintaining adequate control of the *Liberty*, for had she received her pull-back orders, she would not have been in harm's way; 2) If her commanding officer knew and understood her assigned mission he could have used his discretion and not sailed into harm's way; and 3) If her presence had been disclosed to the Israeli Government, it is possible the *Liberty* would not have been attacked.

The major Israeli intelligence failure was depositing the information about the identity of the *Liberty* in the Naval Intelligence office and not disseminating same to the Navy commander and to Air Force air control. Had this been done, it is possible the *Liberty* would not have been attacked.

### **Lessons Learned**

Two important lessons should be learned from the *Liberty* tragedy:

1) Field commanders need to know what they are doing and why. The more complete the briefing, the more likely a commander will be able to exercise discretion for the safety of the personnel under command without degrading the mission or possibly modify the operation to enhance the mission.

2) Sending military units either into, or close to, areas controlled by friendly or hostile forces, or even your own forces, when a major war is raging is risky at best. Friendly fire kills and when armed conflict is taking place, if a ship, plane, tank or person cannot be promptly identified as friend, it will likely be treated as foe.

It is clear that intelligence errors can lead to major disasters. While there is ample blame to cast on both U.S. and Israeli intelligence, the important thing now is not what happened then but what can be done to prevent such a disaster from happening again. In addition to the terrible suffering of the individual victims and their families, the blunders created a major diplomatic issue among friends which was not settled for over 13 years.

On December 17, 1980 the United States and Israel exchanged diplomatic notes settling all issues relating to the attack on the *Liberty* by agreeing that neither country accepted full responsibility for the tragedy.

**Could it happen again – it has!**

On April 14, 1994, U.S. Air Force fighter aircraft shot down U.S. Army helicopters over Iraq. (See Snook, Scott A., *Friendly Fire*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton 2000.) There were three key players in this incident: a U.S. Air Force E-3B Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, a two-ship flight of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, and a two-ship flight of F-15C Eagle fighters.

On 14 April at 0736, the E-3B AWACS took off from Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. The mission of the AWACS was to provide “airborne threat warning and air control for all Operation Provide Comfort aircraft.” (Snook, p. 4). The AWACS would “positively control” all coalition aircraft flying in support of Operation *Provide Comfort*. (Snook, p. 4).

At 0822 the two helicopters took off from Diyarbakir, Turkey, en route to the Military Coordination Center’s (MCC) headquarters in Zakhu. At 0935 the Black Hawks reported their entry into the no fly zone to the AWACS.

At 0935 the flight of two fighters took off from Incirlik Air Base en route to the air space over northern Iraq. At 1022, the lead fighter reported a “radar contact on a low-flying, slow-moving aircraft approximately forty miles southeast of his position.” (Snook, p. 4).

Both F-15 pilots then unsuccessfully electronically interrogated the target with their onboard Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system. The fighters initiated an intercept to investigate. The F-15s continued their intercept by conducting a visual identification (VID) pass of the contact. The flight lead visually identified a helicopter and called, “Tally 2 Hinds.” (Snook, p. 6). “Hind” is the NATO designation for a Soviet-made attack helicopter in the Iraqi inventory. The AWACS controller replied, “Copy, Hinds.” (Snook, p. 6). The second F-15, approximately three miles behind his lead, immediately followed with a VID pass of his own and called, “Tally 2.” (Snook, p. 6).

At approximately 1030, the lead pilot fired an AMRAAM missile at the trail helicopter. Immediately following his lead, the F-15 wingman then fired an AIM-9 Sidewinder missile at the lead helicopter. Both Black Hawk helicopters were instantly destroyed. All twenty-six people on board perished.

There was little in the way of “the fog of war” to blame. It was broad daylight with unlimited visibility on a clear day and no fighting on the ground. Each Black Hawk had *six* U.S.

flags painted on its exterior. Both the F-15s and the UH-60s belonged to the same well-established Combined Task Force. Both flights of aircraft were flying under the “positive” control of the most sophisticated airborne warning and control system in the world. At the time of the shutdown, the AWACS had only these four aircraft to control. Both flights had made several radio contacts with AWACS controllers prior to the shutdown.

This was not an emergency. The fighters had plenty of time. There was little chance that the helicopters could have “escaped”, nor were they ever a serious threat to the F-15s. Both target and shooter aircraft were equipped with sophisticated IFF electronic equipment designed specifically to prevent such accidents.

**Distorted Explanations of Events Obscure the Picture and Destroy the Ability to Learn Real Lessons for the Future**

Multiple official investigation reports and endorsements have all concluded the incident was the result of a tragic mistake or that there is no evidence that the attack was deliberate.

Beginning with the U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry on June 17, 1967, the Court found:

1. Available evidence combines to indicate the attack on Liberty on 8 June was in fact a case of mistaken identity. . .
6. There are no available indications that the attack was intended against a U.S. ship.

On June 18, 1967, Admiral John C. McCain endorsed the Court of Inquiry with the comment:

“15. The foregoing comments by the convening authority lead to an overall conclusion that the attack was in fact a mistake.”

On July 18, 1967 Clark Clifford, Chair of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board concluded, “The weight of the evidence is that the Israeli attacking forces originally believed their target was Egyptian . . . #2. The information thus far available does not reflect that the Israeli high command made a premeditated attack on a ship known to be American.”

The testimony of Defense Secretary McNamara in the report of hearings before Senate Foreign Relations Committee Nineteenth Congress - June 12, July 14 and 26, 1967, pages 266-269: “In the case of the attack on the *Liberty*, it was the conclusion of the investigatory body headed by an Admiral of the Navy [Isaac C. Kidd, Jr.] in whom we have great confidence that

the attack was not intentional. I read the record of investigation and I support that conclusion, and I think . . .it was not a conscious decision on the part of either the government of Israel . . . [t]o attack a U.S. vessel.” (Released by the U.S. Government printing office: 1967.)

Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Stansfield Turner, stated the CIA position in a letter dated February 27, 1978 to Senator Abourezk, “It remains our best judgment that the Israeli attack on the USS Liberty was not made in malice toward the United States and was a mistake.” “Foreign Relations of the United States,” Volume XIX released at noon on January 12, 2004 includes a heretofore classified CIA Intelligence Memorandum dated June 21, 1967 which confirms that the CIA position stated on February 27, 1978 was a CIA finding as of June 21, 1967. [See item 317 on pages 26, 27, and 28, Intelligence Memorandum prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency. See also item 284 on pages 469 through 474, Intelligence Memorandum prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency.]

The 1981 National Security Agency report concluded “... that the [*Liberty*] tragedy resulted not only from Israeli miscalculations but also from faulty U.S. communications practices ....” Further, page 64 of the report states “While these [intercept] reports revealed some confusion concerning the nationality of the ship, they tended to rule out any thesis that the Israeli Navy and Air Force deliberately attacked a ship they knew to be American.”

Since 1967 eight U.S. Presidents (Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush (41), Clinton, and Bush (43), five Republican and three Democrat, have concurred in the conclusion that the attack was a tragic mistake. On September 5, 1991 President George H.W. Bush’s (41) White House, wrote “. . . A thorough investigation into the *USS Liberty* incident was conducted and the conclusion was that it was a tragic case of mistaken identity.” On May 10, 1995 President William Clinton’s White House, wrote, “There is no information available that demonstrates that the attack was deliberate.” On October 2, 2002, President George W. Bush’s White House, wrote “The results of the investigations . . . were considered satisfactory . . .there is no precedent to reinvestigate this case.”

Notwithstanding the foregoing, dozens of conspiracy stories have become part of the literature. They detract from the possibility to learn from the tragedy. They also inflict pain and suffering upon the victims and their families.

A classic case on point is demonstrated by James Bamford. As a former NSA-assigned Navy Communications Technician Bamford should know better. Rather than join the ranks of purveyors of conspiracy by persons and organizations with their own agendas, he should focus on the lessons to be learned and on ameliorating the suffering of the victims. Instead he stirs the wounds and ignores the lessons in favor of spreading myths. As examples I mention only a few.

In 1982, in his book *The Puzzle Palace*, he claimed the motive for the attack on the *Liberty* was to prevent the United States from learning of Israel's plan to attack Syria. When it became apparent that there was no "Syrian secret" by virtue of the intent to attack Syria being published in the *London Times* and by the release of Department of State cable from the U.S. Ambassador in Tel Aviv to the Secretary of State confirming that the Chief of Israel Intelligence briefed both the U.S. Ambassador and the President's special representative, Harry McPherson (see his book, *A Political Education*, University of Texas Press, 1995) about the impending attack on Syria at 11:30 on the morning of June 8, James Bamford created a new motive in his 2002 book *Body of Secrets*. There he claimed the attack was to keep the U.S. from learning of a massacre of large numbers of Egyptian POW's in the Sinai near El Arish. The theory is based on not only a hearsay Associated Press news report by an Israeli (who since has repudiated in writing what the AP wrote) but also Mr. Bamford misrepresenting the contents of a second news report. In addition, the Sinai was fully returned to Egypt in 1982. No mass graves of murdered Egyptian POW's have been discovered near El Arish and no claim of such a massacre has been made by the government of Egypt. One can hardly wait to hear Mr. Bamford's next claimed motive.

Mr. Bamford never hesitates to make claims that are not true. For example, he has stated on radio (Interview by Geoff Metcalf, "National Security Agency: Enemy of the state?," Sunday, June 24, 2001 at [http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=23342](http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=23342) and Interview by Bob Edwards, National Public Radio, Morning edition, June 7, 2001) and in writing that there has never been an investigation of the *Liberty* incident. Not that an investigation was inadequate, not that he disagreed with the findings and conclusions of an investigation but "there has never been an investigation of the Liberty incident." Original documentation of multiple investigations mentioned above may be viewed at [www.thelibertyincident.com](http://www.thelibertyincident.com) including over

700 pages of the record of the U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry which contains 155 pages of sworn testimony of 14 *Liberty* crew members.

In *Body of Secrets* Mr. Bamford claims NSA-assigned Hebrew linguist Dr. Marvin Nowicki believes the NSA EC-121 audio tapes (released by NSA on July 2, 2003) prove the attack was deliberate. The *Wall Street Journal*, May 16, 2001, page A-23, printed Dr. Nowicki's letter to the editor stating that his opinion was the opposite of what Bamford claimed.

Mr. Bamford is cited in the February 1, 2003 *Washington Post* on page C-2: **“Bamford, who clearly won the cooperation of many at the NSA in writing “Body of Secrets,” points out that a special public law exempts the NSA from the Freedom of Information Act so that only Congress or the White House has access to what is classified there.”** It seems incredible that Bamford, who worked for the NSA and purports to have expertise as an intelligence expert is so misinformed about the application of the Freedom of Information Act to the NSA. My Freedom of Information Act inquiry to the NSA was designated FOIA Case 40039 and processed in the normal manner of a Freedom of Information Act request. When the initial request was denied, I filed a federal district court lawsuit Case No. 03-20123 based upon the Freedom of Information Act. The NSA never claimed exemption from the Act. In fact, the Technical Director of the Center for Cryptologic History of the National Security Agency discussed on January 12, 2004 his submitted paper, “2003 National Security Agency Declassification and the *Liberty* Incident” which was about the material declassified as a result of my Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the National Security Agency.

Although Mr. Bamford claims that the NSA senior officers are unanimous in their belief that the attack was deliberate, a *Baltimore Sun* article, originally published on April 24, 2001, stated:

Yesterday, an NSA spokesperson questioned a point made in the book about the USS *Liberty*.

“We do not comment on operational matters, alleged or otherwise; however, Mr. Bamford's claim that the NSA leadership was ‘virtually unanimous in their belief that the attack was deliberate’ is simply not true.”

## Conclusion

When I interviewed General Mordachai “Motti” Hod, the Commander of the Israel Air Force in 1967, initially he did not wish to discuss the *Liberty* incident. He said the survivors and the families of the lost had suffered enough and he did not wish to disturb an old wound. He felt that if believing the attack had not been a mistake gave peace and comfort to the victims of the tragedy then that was more important than further examination of the facts. When made aware of the multiple conspiracy stories in the literature, General Hod was both surprised and distressed at what he characterized as an enormous distortion of the truth. Then he agreed to provide information.

Over thirty six years after the event the conspiracy stories continue to multiply and become more extreme. An additional tragedy of the *Liberty* incident is that persons and organizations with their own agendas continue to provoke, goad and torture the victims with inaccurate, false, and even absurd theories about that sad day, not with a goal of bringing closure and peace, but for several other objectives.

As for the victims, I agree with General Hod, they should be left to believe whatever brings them peace. But as for historians seeking the truth it is respectfully suggested that a review of all evidence, now declassified and available, will lead to the conclusion that the *Liberty* incident was a tragic case of mistaken identity as a result of numerous mistakes by both the United States and Israel and that critical mistakes on each side were made by the respective U.S. and Israeli intelligence communities which, if not made, might have prevented the tragedy.

## APPENDIX I

### CASTLE RECOLLECTIONS

#### INTERFACES:

Following my arrival at the U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv, Israel I was given an “arrival tour” of Israel borders and installations by the Commander of the Israeli Navy, Commodore Yochai Ben-Nun. He was a tall, hard, lean, taciturn fighting man. (Gary Cooper would have played the role in a movie.) Ben-Nun was one of the few holders of Israel’s highest military honor, Hero of Israel. He was notorious throughout the country for his high speed, reckless driving on the highways. The only occasion on which he wore his hero’s ribbon was when he was hailed into traffic court. Although he had retired before the Six Day War, he came out of retirement and fought the war as a common soldier.

Ben- Nun was succeeded by Commodore Shlomo Erell (later Rear Admiral), a polished and sophisticated leader who commanded the Navy during the Six Day War. [The three greatest tragedies of the Navy occurred on Erell’s watch: the Liberty incident, the loss of the submarine, Dakar, and the loss of the destroyer Eilat.]

I met Commander [*name withheld*] Chief of Israeli Naval Intelligence. He had the appearance and high wit of Jerry Colonna (of the Bob Hope show). His nickname was “the Turk.” He was an adventurous swashbuckler. He was said to have sneaked into Lebanon and gambled at the Casino in Beirut, probably an apocryphal tale, but it defines the man.

I also recall Brigadier General Aharon Yariv, Chief of IDF Intelligence, a former officer of the WWII Jewish Brigade. He had a brilliant mind and encyclopedic knowledge. Yariv possessed total, complete knowledge of all Arab orders-of-battle. He headed the best military intelligence service (given its requirements) in the world.

I also worked with Colonel Arye Shalev, LTCOL Arie Lewin - Chief of Israeli Military Foreign Liaison; Major Zev Be'erly - Foreign Liaison Assistant; and Colonel David "Dodik" Karmon, of the Israeli Intelligence Staff. "Dodik" was capable of playing six simultaneous chess games (I was once one of the six - and lost). He gave up "serious chess" to follow a military career.

While I was at the Embassy at Tel Aviv, Ambassador Barbour was well known for having Israeli/US relations "in his hat and head". He dealt personally, one-on-one, on an informal basis, with Levi Eshkol, Aba Eban, Chaim Herzog and after the 1967 war with Golda Mier. Barbour was in frequent telephone conference with President Johnson. He had little need for assistance with other than routine Embassy functions. He was a bachelor. To my knowledge the Ambassador's only real intelligence advisor was the CIA Station Chief, John Hadden, a diffident but highly capable and analytical person with the only well-placed connections with Israeli Mossad (their equivalent of the CIA). I doubt if he'll claim he was the Ambassador's only real intelligence confidante, but in my memory he was. Hadden's relationship with Israeli national intelligence went well beyond those of the American military service attaches. In the Six Day War scenario Hadden was the link between Israeli intelligence and the U.S. Ambassador. I recall only three one-on-one consultations with the Ambassador during my two year stint and one of those was when the Israelis put me "on report" for being too noseey!

**EVENTS:**

Several weeks before the outbreak of war I went on a junket to Bangkok with a party including Shimon Peres (then in politics but out of office). We (and our wives) and other officials and business couples were guests of TWA on the maiden flight between Tel Aviv and Bangkok. News came of an intense air battle over Syria. Peres made a comment suggesting a turning point had been reached. I recall someone using the German term "*zuschlag gebende sache*" - "a defining thing."

Two (or three) nights before the war began I was staying in the Desert Inn in Beersheva. In the middle of the night I was awakened by heavy highway noise and looked out upon an Israeli armored division moving into the Negev. At the end of the column were two dozen or more ambulances. I immediately returned to the Embassy and filed a high priority report with the comment that taking the ambulances along gave added seriousness to the move.

The days before the Beersheva event I had been in Eilat to observe what action may have been occasioned by Egypt's closing of the Straits of Tiran. I encountered the British Naval Attache' to Greece whose name I cannot remember. We had been sent there on the same mission. (He was a Captain, later a Commodore when I met him later on a different occasion in Europe). He had a seaside room in which he'd installed his powerful telescope.

Israeli security was close to perfect - a possibility in a small country. Foreign attaches were unobtrusively and politely kept under surveillance whenever they traveled. Private Israeli citizens would notify local police if they spotted foreign automobiles or "CD" license plates. I do not believe there was ever a time when my location was unknown to the Foreign Liaison Office although COL Perna and I pushed the limits when we were able.

During the Six Day War I was a "willing victim" in a Israeli Navy feint. My Assistant, LT (later CAPT) Lynn Blasch reported to me that landing craft were being loaded aboard tank transports in Haifa. We analyzed (correctly) that they were going to Eilat and guessed (as we were supposed to) that a small scale amphibious operation would be mounted out of that port city. To confirm, we drove down the one highway to a junction point the transports would have to pass. We "hid in the bushes". The transports with landing craft passed by in the night. We made our report by very high priority message. Later I learned that all went in accordance with Israeli plan. Depending apparently on the leak system which seems unavoidable, the Israeli's attempted to implant the idea of a threatened operation -- they never really intended for the effect it would have upon on-going operations in the Sinai. I received good natured chiding about my "night behind the bushes" during my farewell luncheon with the Israeli Navy.

**Captain Ernest Castle USN (RET)**

## APPENDIX II

### HADDEN RECOLLECTIONS

Leading up to the War of 1967: Shooting down of Syrian planes, for example. Might it not have been possible to analyze such a build-up of violence leading to Arab-Israeli wars\* and establish patterns which might provide analysts with another tool to gauge more accurately the probability and timing of future “wars”? (\* “Wars” is not the right word for the confrontations between Arabs and Israelis from 1880 to the present. The early riots, 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, Intifadahs I and II, are all simply occasions or “battles” in the long “100 year war” that is still going on.)

There were three events leading up to the 1967 War - each of which was a *casus belli* for the Israelis: the closing of the Tiran Straits, the introduction of Egyptian troops into Sinai, and the appointment of an Egyptian military chief over the Jordanian Front. So once these had come to pass it was a foregone conclusion that Israel was going to start a preemptive war. I am certain in my own mind that this was clear to both the Soviets and the Egyptians. So, knowing the power of the Israeli military, why did Nasser proceed as he did? And especially why did he ask the UN peace-keepers to leave the Sinai? (I was personally convinced that the Arab military had no chance. The Israelis tried to convince me that they were about to suffer a far greater number of casualties than in 1948. I tended to read this as their argument for immediate support from the US.) The most important thing, in my view, at the time, was for the Israelis to restrain themselves for a period of at least three weeks to give the US President time to pose as a striver for peace - for him to “exhaust” all efforts to avoid war - to give such non-starters as “Rusk’s Navy” a “chance” before giving the “green light” to the Israeli general staff to strike.

The importance of “image” is an interesting aspect of life in the Oval Office. The Israelis don’t understand this and tend to dismiss this kind of thing as unimportant - “*kosmetika*” would be their descriptive word. The Israelis, in my view, were bright enough to accept this with bad grace - and so grudgingly waited until the early morning of 5 June to let fly, thereby giving the President the opportunity of preserving his “image” as a striver and preserver of the peace.

From this experience I derived the Hadden law regarding Arab governments - governments of the sort that existed at that time. Arab administrations seemed to me to be so fragile that occasions would arise when they had to take steps making war unavoidable - even knowing that they were going to lose. I believe this was the case with Nasser in 1967. He felt that he would be toppled if he did not act against the Israelis as the Arab world was pressing him to do. Hence losing to Israel was, dangerous as it was for him, less dangerous than not taking the three decisive actions outlined above which made war inevitable.

I had served in Berlin on and off from 1945, during the Air Lift and until 1954. At first, I did not see how war between the US and the USSR could be avoided. Ultimately, I became convinced that the Soviets were exceedingly cautious and would never push “brinkmanship” and threats too far. And so in 1967, with all the actions undertaken by the USSR, I never believed they would risk war with the Americans at that time and were only rattling the “nukes”.

When I was in Berlin in 1945, I especially recall that General Zukov came to General Eisenhower with a complaint and a question: Confrontations between Soviet and American soldiers were ending up too often in violence. What bothered General Zukov was that invariably the confrontations ended in the Soviet soldiers getting knocked off. Would General Eisenhower be so kind as to look into this matter and advise the Soviets what to do about the matter?

Well, Ike went off, surveyed the problem, and returned a week later with an answer. The problem concerned cultural differences between the two national types. If a disagreement arose, the Soviet reaction was to pull a gun and threaten the American opposite number. The American reaction was never to understand a bluff and so, if threatened with a weapon, was to shoot first and ask questions later. The answer to Zukov's problem was to order his troops to stop bluffing Americans with weapons, loaded or unloaded! The lesson for me was clear: we were facing a nation of congenital bluffers!

I have a vivid picture of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in his night dress offering to take the Soviet Ambassador personally up to the Syrian border to prove to him that Israeli mobilization was not a prelude or preparation for an attack over that Arab border. The total rejection of this offer by the Soviets served to strengthen my view.

I would say that the Israelis kept President Johnson informed in detail during the crisis and during the War that followed. This effort exceeded anything I had experienced up to that time. Of course they were extremely cautious as to use of channels of communication. For example, they never fully trusted the Department of State. The Israelis had become convinced that the Department was influenced by officers who had served in the Middle East outside of Israel - and so would not act on Israel's behalf as a matter of course and as a consequence, might not be as careful with information coming from Israeli sources as they, the Israelis, would have liked. It should be remembered that for every U.S. Embassy staffer who served a tour in Israel and left with established friendships, a far larger number of Embassy staffers served in Arab countries and came away with friendships established with their Arab counterparts. Also any Embassy staffer that served in Israel in the 1960's could not be assigned thereafter to an Embassy in an Arab country. This situation created far more State Department officers with friendly feelings for Arab countries than for Israel.

I cannot comment on the passage of information between Egypt and the United States because I had no information available to me then or since in this area.

The Israelis believed that President Eisenhower's administration had guaranteed to them after the 1956 Suez Campaign that the U.S. would never permit the Straits of Tiran to be closed and would intervene if the Arabs made such a move. This was one of the levers the U.S. used to get the Israelis to move back out of the Sinai at that time. The events of 1967 and the perceived failure of the U.S. to honor its guarantee has, in my view, brought the Israelis to never trust fully any commitment made by the U.S. to act on their behalf in the future.

As to the extent to which Intelligence Services coordinate plans or actions with other services or organizations, I believe that the history and practice of covert activity has led to a culture of secrecy which excludes the notification beforehand of plans or intended action to those outside the immediate service concerned. There is therefore irresistible pressure to maintain all such information on a "need to know" basis. This is carried to great lengths, so that seldom are officers within a service made aware of what other elements led by their colleagues may be planning or intending to engage in. This is simply an extension of the idea, taken for granted by all practitioners of the art, that a Secret Service must at all costs keep all operational activity totally secret. There is therefore a tendency to keep all paperwork highly classified, to keep a hierarchy of clearances for intelligence officers, and certainly to hold all outsiders as being unsuitable recipients of classified information.

What many observers have failed to take into account properly was the extent of the pressures on Israel created by their full and total mobilization for war in the weeks prior to 5 June. The Israelis were running out of time. The entire structure: government, economy, industry, transport, etc. could no longer function with every adult man and woman called into service. For example: mail was being delivered by young girls; every truck and bus had been pressed into service by the IDF; every space, even in residential districts, had been turned into military staging areas; and so it was in every facet of Israeli life throughout the nation. Thus it was that by early June the Israeli mobilization had created a situation where all-out-war was the only option.

I had been recalled to Washington by headquarters during the days leading up to war. On the Saturday preceding the war I flew from Rome to Lod Airport. The First Class El Al compartment was entirely taken up with cases of morphine ampules. The conclusion was obvious. We had only a few hours to go.

The Chief of Mossad, Meir Amit, himself had just returned from his trip to Washington which followed the earlier disappointing trip of Abba Eban. Both Amit and I interpreted that the US government in Washington had given Israel a “green light”. The Israeli cabinet interpreted the message borne by Amit to mean that they could take whatever action they deemed necessary for their survival and that the US would not interfere and would treat them without prejudice.

**John Hadden, CIA (RETI)**

### APPENDIX III

“Foreign Relations of the United States,” Volume XIX does not include the State Department telegram from U.S. Ambassador Walworth Barbour in Tel Aviv to Secretary of State Dean Rusk in Washington, D.C. confirming Israeli disclosure of intentions against Syria in a briefing of the Ambassador and the President’s Special Representative Harry McPherson, on the morning of June 8, 1967 (11:30 AM Sinai Time), thus rendering irrational the conspiracy theory that the Liberty was attacked later that afternoon (2:00 PM Sinai Time) to prevent the U.S. from learning the “Syrian attack secret.”

#### **Telegram From the Embassy in Israel to the Secretary of State**

Tel Aviv, June 8, 1967, 1640Z (1240 Washington)

1. Following is a summary of IDF intelligence chief’s briefing of McPherson of White House June 8, 11:30 a.m.
2. General Yariv said that the principal task of the IDF now was to exploit its success. There still remained the Syrian problem and perhaps it would be necessary to give Syria a blow to get more quote elbow room unquote.
3. In spite of tremendous losses of Soviet material in Sinai it seemed that Soviets still planned to ship matter to UAR. IDF knew that ship had left Russian port in last few days which was loaded with 70 tanks and anti-aircraft [sic] equipment. Israelis learned also last Saturday that Soviets had made arrangements to airlift equipment through Yugoslavia down to UAR. None of this equipment had arrived yet. Israel also had information that some planes for UAR may be coming from Czechoslovakia. Possibly by ship. Yariv indicated some uncertainty about accuracy of this last report.
2. There was also problem of additional Soviet-make aircraft reaching UAR from Algeria. IDF understood Algeria would give UAR 50 airplanes. Between 15 and 20 Algerian aircraft arrived in the UAR beginning June 7.
3. General Yariv then launched into summary of military activities of past few days. He said there were still important amounts of Egyptian armor in Sinai. Egyptians were finding it very difficult to disengage from the Israelis; quote we are on their heel unquote.
4. There was still UAR effort in the air. It had sent up this morning SU-7’s, MIG-17’s, and MIG-21’s. The Egyptians had now an advantage in being closer to their own air bases. Today was the day Israel hoped to be able to decimate Egyptian armor in Sinai. It was making maximum effort with all available aircraft. Egyptians had in action at present

- time between 300 and 400 tanks; they had begun the battle with about 1,000 tanks in Sinai.
5. Yariv then turned to map and described some of the main thrusts of campaigning [sic] to date. There had been a concentration of Egyptian armor in South near Eilat at beginning. IDF chose not to react to this concentration but only feinted in direction of those forces. As tide of battle turned against Egyptians that force fled to West. In the center IDF strategy was to hold initially; in North it was to strike with its maximum effort. In North, the Israeli forces had found a new route through sand between the border and the Wadi El-Arish Road. This force had rather tough fight in the El-Arish area. Egyptians had tried [sic] a counter-attack when the Israeli forces reached El-Arish, but this was a miserable failure. While all this was going on, the Egyptian forces in the South which had been largely ignored should have struck Israeli forces in the North, but they could not because Israel had air superiority. With the developing battle, Israeli forces in North, center and South have moved westward catching up today with the Egyptian forces trying to make their escape across the canal. At the very moment Yariv was speaking, battles were underway in general areas Romani, El-Tasa on the road leading East from Ismailia, Jebel Umn Makhassa, and Mitla Pass. Yariv thought that the IDF had a good chance today to destroy remaining enemy armor in Sinai, though he did not think Israel would be able to get it all. He said that to date out of a thousand Egyptian tanks in the Sinai in beginning, about 300 had been destroyed. There were 300 or 400 still in Sinai (presumably some have made their getaway).
  6. The general referred again to difficulties Israelis were having in operating increasingly far from their bases. They had tried to put the air base at El-Arish in order and were also hoping to use the one at Jebel Libni. Both had been damaged in first morning's raid. There was a third good Egyptian air base to the southwest of Jebel Libni. (Yariv did not say what shape that base was in.)
  7. Sharm El Sheik had posed no problem for Israeli forces. They had taken over by airborne troops. Now forces in that area were working their way up the Gulf of Suez Road toward canal.
  8. Yariv said that the IDF had had no advantage of surprise in their operations. When questioned on this, he did admit they had surprised the UAR force. It was question in Israeli minds whether they would be able to get Egyptian air force on ground. But as it turned out, it had done job in about hour. Israelis had also achieved a certain tactical surprise in their feint toward the Egyptian force in the South near Eilat.
  9. Questioned about casualties, Yariv said they had been much less than expected in Sinai and somewhat more than expected in Gaza. The problem in Gaza had been that the Arabs had been cut off and resisted strongly in guerilla-type actions. A possible figure of as much as 5,000 casualties had been mentioned for Israel, was this close to the mark? Yariv indicated that all casualties to date were below 1,000. He indicated that killed in action were well under 500.
  10. Yariv said he still did not know how many prisoners there had been.

11. The toughest battles? As for armor, they had been in Sinai, but regarding infantry actions, some of hardest fighting had been near Jenin. There, Yariv indicated, the Israelis had not been expecting Jordanian action and had been caught a little off balance.
12. To date Israel had lost about 20 planes, most of it to anti-aircraft. About 60-70 percent of the Syrian airforce had been destroyed. It had had no offensive intentions since the first day or two. Yariv said there were no ground operations in Syria yet, quote unfortunately unquote.
13. Yariv closed with a reiteration of concern expressed earlier about continuing UAR air activity based on repair of damaged aircraft and receipt of new aircraft. Yariv expressed hope that political changes would come about in Egypt which would soon bring about an end of hostilities.

GP-3. Barbour

BT

NOTE: Advance copy delivered to S/S/-O 6/8/67 6 PM

Passed White House 6/8/67 6:22 PM