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## Conference Report

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# Cover-up Continues On 1967 Mideast War

by William Jones

The regular publication of the series “The Foreign Relations of the United States” (FRUS), which comprises recently declassified State Department documents, is normally greeted with a simple one- or two-page announcement issued by the State Department’s Office of the Historian. But the documents recently released that concerned the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War in 1967, were made the focus of much closer examination by a gathering of scholars during a two-day conference at the State Department on Jan. 12-13, undoubtedly with the intent of helping bring the languishing Middle East “Road Map” back to center stage. The forum also revived some unresolved issues in the “special relationship” between the United States and Israel, so dear to the neo-conservative war-mongers gathered around Vice President Dick Cheney.

It was that war which laid the basis for the horrors of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that we see today. As was stressed in opening remarks on Jan. 12 by David Satterfield, the Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs, “The [Six-Day] war defined the shape, literally, of the continuing Middle East conflict, and physically changed the face of the region. When the war ended on June 10th, 1967, Israel was in control of more than double the amount of land it had controlled the week before, and Israel was in control of a Palestinian population. That fact has been a key element in the Arab-Israeli conflict and efforts to end it ever since.”

While admonishing the Palestinian Authority to deal effectively with terrorist activity, Satterfield had a clear-cut message to Israel with regard to the Sharon government’s settlement policy in the occupied territories. “For friends of Israel, the conclusion is hard to escape: Settlement activity must stop, because it ultimately undermines Israeli as well as Palestinian interests,” he said.

As one of the few Arab speakers, Dr. Hisham Khatib, a former Jordanian government minister, pointed out, today’s attempt to establish Middle East peace in a land-for-peace formula, which would restore Arab control over the West Bank and Gaza, in the form of a Palestinian state, is in a sense the restoration of the status quo ante to the 1967 Six-Day War.

### ‘Eretz Israel’ and the Push to War

One of the key issues debated at the conference was the

actual responsibility for the 1967 war. Some Israeli and American scholars, who were preponderant at the conference, argued that the Israelis, propelled by military necessity, simply launched a pre-emptive strike against the Egyptian forces mobilized in the desert, and that the real *casus belli* was the Egyptian mobilization. One Israeli scholar, Dr. Isabella Ginor, reiterated a widespread myth in the region, and claimed that the real perpetrator was the Soviet Union, which wanted to provoke an Egyptian attack on Israel.

While the FRUS documents released by the State Department don’t give an unequivocal picture on this particular question, some of the speakers, who had examined the Israeli sources, argued that there was a desire on the part of certain Israeli circles to foment such a fight, in order to take over the West Bank and Gaza, and strike a blow to Arab nationalism. As a number of speakers emphasized, it was generally known that the Israelis had the technological advantage, and could defeat the Egyptian forces without outside aid. For some, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza was a strategic question; for others, there were the well-worn Biblical arguments, which for them provided sufficient grounds for such a move.

The other side of this picture, to which the State Department files won’t provide much illumination, is the way that certain U.S. intelligence forces, around the notorious CIA Director, James Jesus Angleton, tried to encourage just such a war, in order to undermine President Johnson’s attempts to broker a peace. Angleton was out to redesign the map of the Middle East with an expanded Israel as a potential “hand grenade” aimed at the Arab world, which plug might be pulled at the opportune moment for whatever geopolitical reasons might arise.

With regard to Soviet intentions, Ambassador Richard Parker, who had been one of the top diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo during the crisis, insisted that most of the Soviet leaders, with the possible exception of Marshall Grechko, were intent on avoiding war, and were advising Egypt’s President Gamal Abdul Nasser on ways of doing just that. In fact, when the Israelis attacked, the United States was speaking with Egyptian envoys regarding a possible peaceful settlement.

On the Israeli side, Dr. Tom Segev of the daily *Haaretz* argued that there already had been a very serious discussion within the Israeli leadership to expel the Palestinians living on the West Bank to Jordan and/or Iraq; to annex the West Bank and Gaza; and to populate the conquered territory with Israeli “settlers.” In 1967, before the start of the war, Segev said, Yigal Allon was advocating just such a policy. Even Israeli Gen. Moshe Dayan felt that the expulsion of the Palestinians was “barbaric,” Segev said. Others argued for an occupation with mass expulsions of the Palestinians, transforming the Israeli Defense Forces into an occupying force. “The Palestinians, who had previously played a negligible element in the formulation

of Israeli policy, were now put back in the center of things,” Segev said ruefully.

### Johnson’s Failed Mideast Policy

In the panel on Lyndon Johnson’s Middle East policy, Dr. David Leach from Trinity University told how President Kennedy, who understood the great significance of the nascent nationalism in the Third World countries, including Arab nationalism, was in the process of building a workable relationship with Nasser’s Egypt. When Kennedy was killed and Johnson became President, the new President was more suspicious of such nationalism, a fact of which the Egyptian leader was not unaware.

And yet even Johnson, who, according to Leach, had developed a close relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, was not prepared to accept a permanent occupation of the Palestinian territories, if Israel, as he suspected they might do, conducted a pre-emptive strike.

While Johnson was made aware that the Israelis were indeed going to attack Egypt, he was also intent, as the FRUS documents indicate, on bringing the war to a close quickly and without Israeli annexations, a policy which the Israelis, with support from the Zionist Lobby in the U.S. Congress, successfully undermined. Johnson also warned the Israelis not to attack Syria or Jordan, a request they ignored.

### Israelis Attack USS Liberty

The issue which created the most controversy at the State Department conference, and garnered the most media attention, was a panel that dealt with the Israeli attack on the *USS Liberty*, a U.S. reconnaissance vessel stationed off the coast of Egypt during the 1967 war. In the unprovoked attack, in broad daylight, 37 U.S. sailors were killed and 171 wounded. While the State Department papers give no unequivocal answer to the question of whether the attack was intentional (many of the overheard radio transmissions between the attacking Israeli pilots and their ground controllers just prior to the attack having completely disappeared), the evidence points clearly to foreknowledge on the part of the Israeli attackers, and intent to destroy a U.S. Navy ship, which they suspected was monitoring Hebrew-language traffic among the Israeli forces (see *EIR*, May 2, 2003).

The State Department forum included those who argued that this was simply a case of mistaken identity, as well as others, like author James Bamford, who, using National Security Agency (NSA) files, presents overwhelming evidence that the attack was intentional. But some of the survivors of the *Liberty* attack, who were present in the audience, were prevented from even stating their case.

When a number of these went to the microphone to refute the bogus claims of Israeli author Michael Oren, that the attackers did not see the American flag on the ship, or that they made attempts to identify the ship prior to launching torpedo attacks against the lifeboats on the *Liberty*, they were cut off

by the moderator. Obviously, while academic “debate” on the topic is considered legitimate, any attempt to get at the truth of the matter, even including eyewitness reports, is too hot for the State Department to handle.

The survivors and the families of survivors are demanding a congressional investigation of the *Liberty* incident, because of still unanswered questions and the massive whitewash that was conducted, with the full backing of the Johnson and following administrations, so as not to jeopardize the U.S.-Israeli “special relationship.” (Democratic Presidential contender Lyndon LaRouche has endorsed the call for such an investigation.)

Clarifying the truth behind the 1967 war more generally would also serve to spotlight the folly of much of U.S. Mideast policy, under the influence of such neo-cons as Richard Perle and his friends, during the last 37 years, in which Israel has served as a hand grenade about to explode, whenever a serious attempt at peace is made. Even Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Chief of Staff who led Israeli forces into Jerusalem during the 1967 war, came to realize the folly of such a policy, and sacrificed his life in an attempt to change it. Similar courage must also be shown by those inside and outside the U.S. government, in clarifying the record on a flawed U.S. policy, in order finally to establish a permanent peace between Israel and the Arab world, including the long-awaited creation of a sovereign Palestinian state.

#### COVERUP EXPOSED!

## The Israeli Attack On the ‘USS Liberty’



“The Loss of Liberty,” a video by filmmaker Tito Howard, proves beyond any doubt that the June 8, 1967 Israeli attack against the *USS Liberty*, in which 34 American servicemen were killed and 171 wounded, was deliberate. The video includes testimony from *Liberty* survivors, many Congressional Medal of Honor winners, and from such high-ranking Americans as Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Adm. Arleigh Burke, Gen. Ray Davis, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

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