**SPECIAL SERIES
CRISIS
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Volume 1**

# UNITED STATES CRYPTOLOGIC HISTORY

## Attack on a Sigint Collector, the U.S.S. *Liberty* ~~(S-CCO)~~

**NATIONAL
SECURITY
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# UNITED STATES CRYPTOLOGIC HISTORY

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## Attack on a Sigint Collector, the U.S.S. *Liberty* (S-CCO)

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**NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY/CENTRAL SECURITY SERVICE**
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ask the NSA liaison officer to the JCS/JRC, Mr. J. Connell, on 5 June if any consideration was being given there to a change in the *Liberty*'s operational area. They reminded Connell that during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis five years earlier the U.S.S. *Oxford* had been pulled back from the Havana area. The NSA concern was for the technical collection arrangements which would have to be adjusted if the *Liberty* was to be withdrawn. The NSA liaison officer discussed the matter with JRC's ship-movement officer and then advised Sheck and Harvey that no action was then under consideration.[22]

(U)                On 6 June, as it was passing between Libya and Crete, the *Liberty* reported to Sixth Fleet that its TRSSCOMM, which had had malfunctions in its power supply and hydraulic systems on the trip from Rota, was again operating satisfactorily and, in reply to a Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Navy Europe query concerning Pims not being received, provided the date-time group of Pims previously sent.

(SC)                USN-855's communications on the 6th to NSA were normal — its 24-hour summary for 5 June, its informal technical summary no. 3, a Spot report, its follow-up to a ⬚ Critic, ⬚

and other reports all being received without communication difficulties. It was also in satisfactory communication with ⬚ in this period.[23]

(U)                On this same day, 6 June, the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Navy Europe told the Commander, Sixth Fleet that the *Liberty* was to come under his operational control at 0001Z, 7 June 1967 in order "to facilitate area command and control and any possible requirement for protection during the Middle East hostilities" and pointed out that the *Liberty*'s schedule might be revised for safety reasons "as dictated by the local situation."[24] *Liberty* acknowledged the instructions concerning its operational control at 2036Z on the 6th. *Liberty*'s commanding officer, Commander McGonagle, also told the Commander, Sixth Fleet that the ship was in a "Readiness Condition Three-Modified" and reminded his superior that the ship's "self-defense capability" was limited to four .50-caliber machine guns and small arms.

(U)                Three hours later the Commander, Sixth Fleet cautioned its new charge by message to "maintain a high state of vigilance against attack or threat of attack" in view of the "unpredictability of U.A.R. actions." He directed the *Liberty* to report by Flash precedence any threatening actions or "any diversion from schedule necessitated by external threat" and to submit "reports of contact with ships, aircraft, and submarines which are unidentified, of

intelligence interest, or engage in harassment." Admiral Martin also instructed the *Liberty* to copy the fleet broadcast and to use his fast carrier task force (TF-60) tactical circuits if necessary.[25] *Liberty* did not receive, for one reason or another, this message.[26]

(U)                On 7 June at 0800Z the *Liberty* was off the coast of the U.A.R. and approaching operational areas two and three. Despite the Immediate Precedence assigned to the *Liberty*'s Sitrep/Posit report at 0908Z, 7 June, giving its position at 0800Z at 33-06N 28-54E, it took, according to a JCS postmortem report, some fifteen and one-half hours for the *Liberty*'s position report to reach the Commander, Sixth Fleet, the action addressee.[27] *Liberty* was now guarding the fleet broadcast of the Naval Communications Station, Asmara. On this day a number of actions were under way to minimize the appearance of U.S. involvement in the Middle East hostilities and to change the *Liberty*'s operational area.

(TSC)

(C)                In a message to the Commander, Sixth Fleet, the JCS took note of new U.A.R. allegations, possibly derived in JCS's opinion from the U.A.R.'s ⬚ to the effect that U.S. personnel were in communication with Israel and were possibly providing military assistance. Equally concerned about the earlier U.A.R. allegations that U.S. aircraft had participated in the Israeli air strikes against the U.A.R., the JCS asked for assurance from Vice Admiral Martin that his aircraft were not within 200 miles of the U.A.R., Syria, or Israel and that there were no Sixth Fleet communications or other contacts with Israel.[29] The Commander, Sixth Fleet replied negatively, observing only that radio voice circuits had been established with the American Embassy in Tel Aviv and that transmissions so far had only been for testing purposes.[30]

(C-CCO)                Studying the successful Israeli drive into U.A.R. territory, the Director, NSA decided that the *Liberty*'s opportunity for effective collection of

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(U)     The action messages directing withdrawal of the *Liberty* to a CPA of 100 nm were three in number: JCS 080110Z, Sixth Fleet 080917Z referred to in the foregoing, and Commander-in-Chief, Europe's 080625Z to NAVEUR confirming informal exchanges giving action on the JCS message to NAVEUR. Information copies of the JCS and the CINCEUR action messages were to have gone to the U.S.S. *Liberty*, and it is, of course, entirely possible that timely receipt of these might have triggered a withdrawal action on the part of the *Liberty*'s Commander McGonagle. But the same unkind fate guarding the action messages was also looking after the information copies. These too ran into communications problems of one kind or another, and the *Liberty* would not receive them.[39]

## Operational Area Three, 8 June (U)

(S-CCO)     Once on station off Port Said in operational area three, USN-855 employed its collection positions primarily to develop U.A.R.

communications

(SC)     The *Liberty* had no specific assignment to intercept Israeli communications while it was in operational area three. Omission of this tasking was, in part, owing to the lack of Hebrew linguists. But on the morning of 8 June its VHF search positions did produce three tapes of Israeli air traffic. The contents were, as determined later, routine operational messages. As a by-product of searching for U.A.R. communications in the Sinai, USN-855 also identified some 22 frequencies as Israeli, but again there was nothing relatable in any way to the forthcoming attack.[41]

## *Liberty's* Processing Mission (U)

(S-CCO)     On station in operational area three, USN-855's processing and reporting constituted a complex undertaking. It was to provide daily technical summaries for use by other collectors and NSA, enabling them to remain up to date on the *Liberty*'s operation. Upon completion of its deployment, USN-855 was to provide traffic and unprocessed tapes to NSA

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[42]

(C-CCO)     The war had changed the status of the U.A.R.'s Armed Forces and had diminished significantly the *Liberty*'s opportunity to collect the specified communications. Much of the U.A.R.'s Air Force no longer existed, its Army was in disarray, and communications had declined accordingly.

## Notes

*Source documents are in the "Crisis Collection" of the NSA History Collection.*

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[1](U)     Julie Alger, "A Review of the Technical Research Ship Program, 1961-1969," 1 May 1970.

[2](C-CCO)     Source documents used for information on *Liberty*'s mode of operation include: NSA Station Facilities Book - U.S.S. *Liberty* (USN-855); (U) NSA OPINS No. 2855, *Manual of U.S. Sigint Operations*, 12 Mar 1965; (U) JCS message cite no. 5838, 052235Z Nov 65; and (U) NSA oral history interview with Terry L. McFarland on 23 Jun 1980.

[3](U)     JCS msg cite no. 6499, 291602Z May 1967.

[4](U)     COMSERVRON 8 msg, 240020Z May 1967.

[5](U)     *Liberty* msg, 241732Z May 1967.

[6](U)     USCINCEUR msg, 300932Z May 1967.

[7](U)     USCINCEUR msg 010035Z Jun 1967.

[8](U)     NSA Staff, "Informal Paper on *Liberty*'s Communications," 22 Jun 1967; NSA oral history interview with Gene Sheck on 11 Aug 1980.

[9](C-CCO)     Source documents relating to *Liberty*'s preparations at Rota include: DIRNSA msg to NSAEUR Office, Germany, 26 May 1967; DIRNSA msg to USN-855, 252317Z May 1967; and DIRNSA msg, 232133Z May 1967.

[10](U)     DIRNSA msg to JCS/JRC, 292013Z May 1967.

[11](U)     JCS msg cite no. 6724, 011545Z Jun 1967.

[12](U)     *Liberty* msg to CINCNAVEUR, 021132Z Jun 1967; CINCNAVEUR msg, 020717Z Jun 1967.

[13](U)     Source documents used in discussion of the Air Force's TPC include: ESC, *History of the 6931st Security Group, 1 Jan-30 Jun 1967*; NSA Staff, "Operations Staff Summary," ca. 16 Jun 1967; NSA Staff, "Airborne Collection in the Middle East," undated; NSA Staff (G62), "Briefing on the 1967 Middle East Crisis," undated.

[14](U)     DIRNSA msg to USN-855, 292201Z May 1967.

[15](U)     *Liberty* msg, 022108Z Jun 1967.

[16](U)    NSA oral history interview, Terry L. Mc-Farland, 23 Jun 1980.

[17](U)    CINCUSNAVEUR msg 031016Z Jun 1967.

[18](U)    CINCUSNAVEUR msgs, 051352 and 051850Z Jun 1967.

[19](U)    COMSIXTHFLT msg, 052015 Jun 1967.

[20](U)    NSA oral history interview, Robert L. Wilson, 6 May 1980; DIRNSA msg to USN-855, 252317Z May 1967.

[21](U)    NSA oral history interviews with Robert L. Wilson on 6 May 1980 and with Paddy E. Rhodes on 13 June 1980.

[22](U)    NSA Staff, "Report to the Director," 12 Jun 1967; House Appropriations Committee Surveys and Investigations Staff, *A Report to the Committee on Appropriations - U.S. House of Representatives on the Effectiveness of the Worldwide Communications Systems and Networks of the Department of Defense,* vol. I, p. iv, "U.S.S. *Liberty* Incident," December 1967.

[23](U)    NSA Staff, "Informal Paper on *Liberty*'s Communications," 22 Jun 1967.

[24](U)    CINCNAVEUR msg to Sixth Fleet, *Liberty,* and others, 061357Z Jun 1967.

[25](U)    COMSIXTHFLT msg to *Liberty* and others, 062349Z Jun 1967.

[26](U)    MG J. R. Russ, USA, "Report of the JCS Fact Finding Team-U.S.S. *Liberty* Incident, 8 Jun 1967," p. 17. Hereafter cited as the Russ Report.

[27](U)    Russ Report, p. 18.

[28](U)    NSA Staff (G62), "Briefing on the 1967 Middle East Crisis," undated.

[29](U)    JCS msg cite no. 7239, 070259Z Jun 1967.

[30](U)    COMSIXTHFLT msgs to JCS, 070626Z and 071503Z Jun 1967.

[31](U)    Russ Report, p. 19.

[32](U)    NSA Staff, "Report to the Director," 12 Jun 1967, chronology section.

[33](U)    JCS msg cite no. 7337 to CINC-EUR with information copy to *Liberty,* 072230Z Jun 1967.

[34](U)    Russ Report, pp. 35, 36.

[35](U)    Russ Report, p. 23; NAVEUR Contingency Watch Team, "Memorandum-U.S.S. *Liberty* Incident," 12 Jun 1967; NSA Staff, "U.S.S. *Liberty*-Chronology, 23 May-8 Jun."

[36](U)    Russ Report, p. 23 and Tab 2 to Annex D.

[37](U)    Ibid, p. 24.

[38](U)    Ibid, pp. 26-27.

[39](U)    Detailed information on the communications delays is in the Russ Report and also in the House Appropriations Committee report cited in footnote 22.

[40](U)    DIRNSA msg to USN-855, 022333Z Jun 1967.

[41](C-CCO)    NSA Staff, "Note for the Director, Sigint Reflection of *Liberty* Incident," 27 Jun 1967; (U) NSA Staff, "Questions by Gen. Carroll, Director, DIA - Answers Provided by G Group/P04," 27 Jun 1967.

[42](C-CCO)    DIRNSA msg to USN-855, 022333Z Jun 1967; NSA Staff, "Critique-SRB Crayon," 10 Jul 1968.

# Chapter VII

# The Incident under Review (U)

(U)    Following the attack on the *Liberty*, both the Executive and the Legislative Branches set about ascertaining the basic facts surrounding the incident. Other than the U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry and the cursory Israeli Board of Inquiry immediately after the event, reviews went forward under the auspices of the House Appropriations Committee, the JCS, and NSA. In addition, a Special Committee of the National Security Council elicited information to answer the Administration's questions on the incident.

## The NSA Review and Reaction (U)

(U)    The eighth of June proved to be a busy day for NSA's directorate. Having received a Critic message on the *Liberty*'s dilemma, Brigadier General John Morrison of NSA's Production Organization, notified the directorate of the event at about 0900 hours, Washington time. Some 45 minutes later, the directorate learned that the attack had been by the Israelis.

(C-CCO)    Immediate concern was for the safety of the personnel and the security of the materials on board. During the day urgent requests went out from NSA to the National Military Command Center (NMCC), other offices in the Pentagon, and the Bureau of Naval Personnel to ascertain if the names of any of the three NSA civilians on board appeared on the casualty list. Both General Marshall S. Carter and Dr. Louis W. Tordella became aware that the ship was in shallow water, 35-40 fathoms. And they knew, of course, that the ship held technical materials which would reveal the mission of the ship and that it had electronic equipment which would compromise U.S. success in demultiplexing VHF and UHF multichannel communications. Accordingly, Dr. Tordella asked JRC's Captain Merriwell W. Vineyard, USN, to have all documents on board the *Liberty* burned and all equipment saved, if possible. General Carter was

prepared to recommend all necessary action to insure the security of the technical material and equipment, should the ship go under but, in discussions with the JRC, ruled out the deliberate scuttling of the ship since its presence in shallow water made compromise of materials and equipment a distinct possibility.

(C-CCO)    Other concerns were for the reassignment of the *Liberty*'s intercept mission to other collectors, [                    ] in the face of the inevitable attention the press would give to this incident, and for developing a core of information for the expected questions the Agency would receive from DoD and other officials.

(S-CCO)    As the eighth of June wore on, the NSA staff considered ways to reassign *Liberty*'s mission. [                    ] Should the U.S. actively enter the hostilities as a belligerent, they were willing to consider assignment of certain Sigint tasks [                    ] Finally, they considered redeployment of the U.S.S. *Belmont*, scheduled for refitting at Norfolk at about that time. Only the last mentioned seemed promising in consideration of the *Liberty*'s VHF/UHF mission, but full approval for assignment of the *Belmont* would not be forthcoming. They also confirmed that the U.S. airborne collection flights out of Athens would continue without interruption.

(C-CCO)    The NSA directorate examined *Liberty*'s [          ] If there should be questions about the civilians on board, what should be said? Dr.

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means employed in issuing operational directives of the JCS to the U.S.S. *Liberty* and the specific orders to the *Liberty* between 1 June and 8 June 1967, and to identify and develop information on conflicting directives, delays in message traffic, and nonreceipt of orders. The team was to report its findings, along with recommendations, to the JCS.

(C-CCO) The JCS team visited NSA, other Washington-area principals, and concerned military staffs and commands in Europe and the Mediterranean. On 10 June, as the team began its fact-finding mission, General Carter called General Russ and offered the total cooperation of NSA and followed through on this offer by making as much information available to him as required, although General Russ had already decided not to concentrate on sensitive (that is, special intelligence) matters.

(U) As the work of the fact-finding team was drawing to a close, General Russ provided on 18 June a preliminary report to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Earle Wheeler, USA. He apprised the Chairman of the four messages from higher headquarters on 7/8 June to subordinate commands designed to change the *Liberty*'s CPA, receipt of which by *Liberty* "would undoubtedly have resulted in the ship's being a greater distance from the scene of action...." Despite the *Liberty*'s having been either an action or an information addressee on each of these messages, General Russ's team found no evidence that the ship received any one of them. Nor did his team find, for that matter, any evidence of conflicting directives governing the *Liberty*'s operation. General Russ also made note of the irregular procedure JCS itself had adopted in bypassing Commander-in-Chief, Europe when it passed verbal instructions to Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Navy Europe, and he recounted the reasons for delays at NAVEUR and Sixth Fleet in translating the JCS directive into action.

(U) By 20 June the JCS Fact Finding Team had completed its work, had prepared its report, and had made its recommendations to the JCS. Of the 17 recommendations made, 9 concerned the missions, functions, operational responsibilities, and operational control/technical tasking and guidance matters; the other 8 related to communications, traffic management, methods, facilities, and availability of trained personnel. In reviewing and commenting on the report's recommendations for the JCS, the J3 and J6/JCS reserved follow-on action for the first category of recommendations to the Joint Staff but assigned responsibilities to various other agencies for study and implementation actions in the second category of recommendations. NSA drew assignments on three recommendations dealing with emphasis on dedicated command-and-control circuitry rather than on common-user circuitry, with measures to improve fleet control communications via communications satellite technology, and with the amalgamation of NATO and U.S. military communications.

(C-CCO) Other than the three recommendations on which it participated as an action agency, NSA was concerned about some of the other findings in the report. One recommendation was, for example, that "procedures governing the control of surveillance platforms be made more definitive with respect to technical research ships to insure that "artificial barriers between operational elements of staffs and NSA/Naval Security Group" owing to security considerations be eliminated "in order to improve the value and timely utilization of the Sigint products at all major command echelons." Insofar as NSA was concerned, this recommendation was off the mark since Sigint product already went directly to all commands and not through NSA/Naval Security Group staffs. NSA commented formally on this point in a letter to Major General G.B. Pickett, Vice Director for Operations (J-3); in its commentary on the Russ report for the JCS, the J-3 discounted this recommendation.

(U) When copies of the JCS Fact Finding Team's report reached NSA at the end of June, General Carter instructed the chief of his telecommunications organization, Colonel Leslie J. Bolstridge, USAF, to review the report in minute detail with a view to "correcting our procedures wherever we can profit from this debacle of military communications." Since the Russ report primarily dealt with command-and-control communications, the Russ recommendations had only marginal pertinence to NSA's own communications.[2]

## Congressional Review (U)

(U) Following a hearing focusing on the JCS messages which failed to reach the *Liberty*, the House Appropriations Committee on 14 August 1967 directed its Surveys and Investigations staff to examine the effectiveness of the DoD worldwide communications system. The staff studied the delays and nondelivery of messages originated on 7 and 8 June directing the withdrawal of the *Liberty* as a springboard to its broader review of DoD's worldwide communications. The staff produced a two-volume report for the chairman of the congressional committee. Volume I reviewed the communications problems in the *Liberty* incident, volume II the worldwide communications systems and networks of the DoD.

(U)           In its work, the Surveys and Investigations staff interviewed JCS, NSA, Naval Communications Command, Department of Army Communications Center, and JCS Message Center personnel in the Washington area and most of the military commands and communications centers in the Pacific and European regions which had been involved with *Liberty*'s communications in one way or another.

(U)           Essentially the staff covered the same ground that General Russ's team plowed earlier. They worked their way through all the communications errors made during the attempts to withdraw the *Liberty* on 7/8 June. The staff was somewhat more critical than the JCS Fact Finding Team of the failure to deliver to the *Liberty* the information copies of the JCS and CINCEUR messages directing withdrawal (JCS 080110Z June 67 and CINCEUR 080625Z June 67). Specifically, they wanted to know if a typical commander would take action on an information copy of this kind from a higher command before receiving the implementing message of his immediate superior. They tested the matter with unnamed U.S. Navy officials who had commanded both large and small naval vessels and learned, according to the report, that there would have been no question that if the *Liberty* had received the information copies, "the Captain of the *Liberty* would have moved within minutes without waiting for an implementing order."

(U)           In its volume II, the congressional staff took full note of the breakdown of the precedence system in communications and drew upon DoD-provided information for the Middle East crisis. Of some 452 high-precedence, (Flash and Immediate) crisis-related DoD messages, only 22 percent of the Flash and 30 percent of the Immediate messages actually met established precedence criteria.

(U)           Part of the delay in transmitting the Immediate-precedence Sixth Fleet withdrawal message to the *Liberty,* it will be recalled, was owing to the urgency of equal or higher precedence (that is, Flash) messages. During the crisis, originators assigned Immediate precedence to messages on subjects such as these: enlisted men reassignments, hospital-patient reports unrelated to the crisis, friendly ship locations and movements, setting up of press conferences,

changes in reporting formats, U.S. military sales policies, and reorganization of Army Reserve units. In contrast, actual instructions called for assignment of Immediate precedence to "situations which gravely affect the security of national/allied forces or populace, and which require immediate delivery to the addressees" — for example, amplifying reports of initial enemy contact, reports of unusual major movements of military forces of foreign powers during peacetime or during strained relations, attack orders, and urgent intelligence messages.

(U)           While the congressional staff directed most of its attention to DoD command communications, it also took note of Criticomm which, they found functioned throughout the crisis relatively free of problems. The staff was aware of steps NSA took to keep Criticomm free of the overburdening traffic common in crisis situations, particularly an 8 June action in which NSA directed the curtailment of electrical forwarding of all routine reports so that crisis-related traffic could flow expeditiously.[3]

## Notes

*Source documents are in the "Crisis Collection" of the NSA History Collection.*

[1](U) (C) —      LTG Marshall S. Carter, Memorandum for the Record, 8 June 1967; Dr. Louis W. Tordella, Memorandum, "Directorate's Temporary Mid-East Information Group," 8 June 1967; Walter G. Deeley, Memorandum for the D/DIR, "U.S.S. *Liberty*," 14 June 1967; NSA Staff, "Report to the Director, NSA," 12 June 1967; and DIRNSA letter to MG J. R. Russ, (JCS Fact Finding Team), 12 June 1967.

[2](U)      The Russ Report; NSA Director, handwritten notes, 8 and 10 June 1967; JCS/J-3, "Note by the Secretaries to the JCS on U.S.S. *Liberty* Incident," JCS no. 2308/378, 24 June 1967; Joint Command and Control Requirements Group, Memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Fact Finding Team," 18 June 1967; Walter G. Deeley, letter to Vice Director for Operations (J-3), 29 June 1967.

[3](U)      House Appropriations Committee Surveys and Investigations Staff, *A Report to the Committee on Appropriations - U.S. House of Representatives on the Effectiveness of the Worldwide Communications Systems and Networks of the DoD, U.S.S. Liberty Incident,* vol. I pp. 48-50. vol. II, pp. 75-76.

# Chapter VIII

# A Final Look (U)

(C-CCO) Perhaps the *Liberty* has undergone scrutiny long enough. First the Israeli Court of Inquiry examined the event, exculpation of Israeli nationals apparently not being hindmost in the court's calculations. Then the U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry studied the incident. The JCS review actively sought to identify faulty procedures and practices for corrective action. The NSA review was essentially fact-finding in nature. And the House Appropriations Committee review, made as it was without all the information available to the JCS team, nonetheless reconstructed many of the basic findings of that team and sought to use them as a mirror in which to observe problem areas in DoD's worldwide communications. Despite the official scrutiny, it is still necessary to comment briefly on a few subjects of interest and concern to cryptologic organizations.

## Safety Estimates for Collection Missions of Mobile Platforms (U)

(C) One principal area of concern was the manner in which safety factors were adjudged. Prior to the *Liberty* incident, commanders did not essentially regard mobile collectors as integral components of their commands. After all, JCS/JRC assigned the schedules and routes, the platforms existed to satisfy "national intelligence" and — as they may have thought — not their own intelligence requirements, and NSA was on the sidelines as a major interested party. As General Russ learned, commanders accordingly felt some uncertainty as to their specific responsibilities in supporting these platforms. The General reasoned therefrom, and so stated in his report, that commanders must have adequate knowledge of a ship's mission if they are to control and support it effectively.

(U) JCS/JRC looked to the unified and specified commands to provide for the safety of the mobile collectors. The regional commands were in close touch with political and military conditions in which the platforms operated and were, JCS/JRC believed, in the best position to evaluate safety factors.[1]

(C-CCO) In the *Liberty* incident, the Commander, Sixth Fleet, was responsible for the safety of the ship. But Vice Admiral Martin was not in a position to evaluate the expected intelligence gain or assign degrees of importance to the expected intelligence gain in terms of changing risk factors. Judgment on the value of the intelligence to be gained could come only from DoD-level intelligence agencies — and, in the case of the *Liberty*, particularly from NSA.

(C-CCO) In the aftermath of the incident, there was indeed some soul searching on this point within NSA. The head of NSA's Temporary Mid-East Information Group told Dr. Tordella in mid-June that he believed NSA could not really absolve itself totally from the safety considerations. He believed that NSA may have to demonstrate "that the need is not established frivolously" and questioned whether or not the intelligence requirements against which NSA worked at the time were really of such a compelling nature as to justify using the special operational areas in the Middle East which NSA designated.[2]

(C-CCO) One has to pose this question. Had NSA sent a message to the JCS/JRC on 5 June, the day war broke out, and stated simply that the agency which initiated the mission in the first place, NSA, now believed the risk to its cryptologic materials and personnel outweighed its estimate of technical and intelligence benefits to be derived, would there have been more expeditious action by JCS/JRC to cut the mission short? NSA may have drawn a mild rebuke for presuming to evaluate safety factors. But the hypothetical NSA message might have added to the position the CNO was taking at about this time to increase the ship's CPA, and it might have stimulated JCS/JRC action earlier than 080110Z.

(C-CCO) On 8 June NSA was, however, of a totally different mind. Since it did not want to lose

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the coverage it had planned for the Middle East, it sent a message to the JCS/JRC proposing assignment of the U.S.S. *Belmont* to the eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean as soon as possible after that ship's expected arrival at Norfolk on the next day.[3] The Director, NSA later withdrew this request in the face of reluctance on the part of the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic[4] and reevaluation of the CPA constraints on mission effectiveness.

(C-CCO)    In reflecting on the *Liberty/Pueblo* incidents in an oral history interview, General Marshall S. Carter said

> as a result of both of those traumatic experiences, we have reviewed our procedures and found there was little change needed in NSA-JCS relationships, but there were some changes needed in the chain of command supervision and monitoring... of just where the ship is, and what it is doing, and was it necessary.

(C-CCO)    As it turned out, the *Liberty* incident — and some six months later the *Pueblo* seizure — brought about some modification in the JCS/JRC procedures for weighing risk vs. intelligence-gain factors. Instead of relying entirely on military assessments, the new procedures took into account intelligence-agency information relating to potential risk.[5] Just prior to the *Pueblo*'s capture, NSA had apprised the JCS of Sigint from North Korean communications portending difficulties for the *Pueblo*.

(U)    NSA should not yield or should yield grudgingly to others, this review would suggest, in safety evaluations of missions involving large holdings of Sigint materials, equipment, and personnel.

## Availability of Linguists (U) (C-CCO)

(C-CCO)    Looking back on the *Liberty* incident, one perhaps should fault the cryptologic organization for not assuring the presence on board of qualified Hebrew linguists for on-station examination of Israeli voice communications uncovered in the intercept from the nonmorse search and development mission and for not even having a token mission on Israeli voice communications. It turned out that Hebrew language tapes produced by USN-855 from the search and development mission on the morning of 8 June did not contain information on the forthcoming Israeli attack, but NSA did not learn this until it had received these tapes and had processed them several days after the event. For all NSA and USN-855 knew at the time, information on Israeli intentions towards the ship might well have been on those tapes.

(C-CCO)    Hebrew linguists were, to be sure, in short supply. In sending three Hebrew linguists to fill out the staff of the U.S. Air Force Security Service's

technical processing center at [        ] NSA had sent to the field all but one of its Hebrew linguists. Prior to the *Liberty*'s arrival at Rota, Spain, the Naval Security Group had inventoried its available linguists in order to select Arab linguists for assignment to USN-855. One of the selectees, it turned out, carried the classification "Special Arabic" — in reality, Hebrew— and assignment of that individual was by accident rather than by design. USN-855 did not use him as a Hebrew linguist.

(U)    As in other situations — the lack of Vietnamese linguists during the Vietnam period, for example — this lack of Hebrew linguists showed that the linguist talent pool available to U.S. cryptologic agencies for employment in crisis conditions was not always adequate.[6]

## Communications Problems (U)

(U)    Errors made in the handling of communications accounted, in some measure, for the *Liberty* tragedy. Studied in great detail by the JCS Fact Finding Team and reviewed by the staff of the House Appropriations Committee, the communications problems posed a challenge for the JCS and for DoD agencies in the immediate post-*Liberty* period.

(U)    NSA was not the DoD action office for correcting faulty communications procedures, but it was indeed a very interested party to corrective actions stimulated by the Russ Report. Doing what he could, General Carter called Army Chief of Staff, General Harold K. Johnson, about the considerable number of mishandled messages in the Department of Army's communications center in the Pentagon, particularly those coming to NSA, and on 3 July provided General Johnson's staff with examples of message mishandling during the *Liberty* incident. Department of Army's response was positive, and soon thereafter its Communications Staff added page monitors on its circuits to NSA to check assignment of address groups. Errors diminished from some 40 to 7 a day out of an average daily total of 1,000 transmissions. General Carter also insisted, as noted earlier, that his staff examine the Russ Report recommendations relating to DoD communications for any possible application to NSA's Criticomm network.[7]

## File Reduction for Exposed Collectors (U)

(TS-CCO-NF) The Six Day War and the *Liberty* incident created conditions in which Sigint personnel had to take fast action to prevent loss of their documentation and equipment. [        ] [        ] while dealing successfully with

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