

## No, Israel Did Not Deliberately Attack the U.S.S. Liberty

### THE LIE

Israel deliberately attacked the U.S.S. Liberty in 1967, proving that Israel is not a true ally of the United States.

### THE TRUTH

The U.S.S. Liberty incident was a tragic misidentification—not a deliberate attack—and consistent with other allied friendly-fire incidents.

### BACKGROUND

- On June 8, 1967, the U.S.S. Liberty, an American intelligence vessel, was operating in international waters north of the Sinai Peninsula during the Six-Day War. ([Liberty Incident](#))
- Acting on faulty intelligence and a misidentification of the ship, Israeli forces struck the Liberty with cannon fire, rockets, napalm, and torpedoes. Thirty-four American crew members were killed and roughly 170 were wounded.
- The moment Israeli commanders recognized the vessel as American, the attack was called off. Israel issued a formal apology, offered medical assistance, and paid compensation.
- In the decades since, the USS Liberty Veterans Association (LVA) has maintained that the attack was deliberate — a claim that has been repeatedly amplified by compulsive Israel critics who use it to argue that Israel is not a genuine U.S. ally.
- On March 20, 2026, podcaster Shawn Ryan published an interview with author Michael Lester in which Lester repeated the deliberate attack claim and used it to suggest that Israel exerts undue control over the United States. ([Shawn Ryan](#))

### TRUTH EXPLAINED

- The core conspiracy theory — that Israel colluded with President Johnson to attack the ship, blame Egypt, and draw the U.S. into World War III — falls apart under the slightest scrutiny. Israel never tried to blame Egypt. Egypt's air force had already been destroyed, and Egypt was hours from a ceasefire. There was no war left to drag the U.S. into, and no Egyptian aircraft left to pin the attack on. ([Britannica](#)), ([Cam Higby](#))
- LVA President Phil Tourney described two Israeli planes attacking the ship in earlier accounts — then claimed thirty planes in a 2025 debate. The reported duration of the attack similarly shifted, from 90 minutes to two hours depending on the telling, despite evidence suggesting the engagement lasted far less time. ([Cam Higby](#))
- LVA members claim Israel used unmarked aircraft to make the attack appear Egyptian — then sent in torpedo boats flying the Star of David. But if the goal was to frame Egypt, openly identifying the Israeli vessels mid-attack destroyed the entire cover story. ([Cam Higby](#))
- Tourney and others have alleged that survivors were threatened into silence. But crew members gave interviews within days of the incident. They have since written books, made films, held public events, and spoken openly for nearly six decades — without consequence. That is not what suppressed testimony looks like. ([Cam Higby](#))
- The claim that the incident was swept under the rug is false. Many U.S. government inquiries examined the attack: the Naval Court of Inquiry (1967), the CIA, the Joint Chiefs, Clark Clifford's review, congressional hearings in 1967, 1968, and 1971, the Senate Intelligence Committee (1979), and the NSA (1981). None found evidence of deliberate targeting. ([CIA report](#)), ([Clifford Report](#)), ([Naval Court of Inquiry](#)), ([CIA](#)), ([Joint Chiefs of Staff](#)), ([Liberty Incident](#))
- Recordings of Israeli pilot communications capture the pilots expressing genuine confusion, believing they were attacking an Egyptian vessel. Once the mistake was recognized, the attack was called off. ([NSA](#)), ([NSA](#))
- **Friendly-fire incidents happen between close allies and don't define relationships.** During the Gulf War, U.S. forces mistakenly killed British soldiers despite full allied coordination. In March 2026, Kuwaiti air defenses shot down U.S.

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aircraft during joint operations against Iran. Neither incident prompted claims of deliberate hostility or redefined those alliances. The same standard must apply here. ([New York Times](#)), ([U.S. Central Command](#))

### QUOTES

- "In the summer of 1967 the Israeli leadership considered American goodwill towards Israel to be its supreme political interest, second only to Israel's existence." – Captain/Judge A. Jay Cristol, lead historian of the Liberty Incident
- "Although the Liberty is some 200 feet longer than the Egyptian transport El Quesir, it could easily be mistaken for the latter vessel by an overzealous pilot. Both ships have similar hulls and arrangements of masts and stack." – CIA report

### TAKEAWAY

**The narrative survives because it serves a purpose, not because it has evidence.** No new facts have emerged in six decades to support the deliberate-attack theory. What keeps it alive is its utility: it provides historical-sounding cover for the claim that Israel is a uniquely malicious or controlling force in American affairs. When a narrative persists despite being consistently disproven, the question to ask is who benefits from keeping it alive – and why.