

Israel downed five MiGs in '70 dogfight, book claims

WASHINGTON [UPI]—A new book describing intrigues in the Middle East says there are strong indications the Soviet Union was responsible for the mysterious 1968 disappearance of an Israeli submarine with 64 people aboard.

If so, it says, the Israelis got revenge two years later when eight of their U.S.-supplied Phantom jets shot down five Russian MiG-21s in a dogfight over the Suez Canal.

The Israeli victory was due to an intimate knowledge of the MiG-21 gained through study and flights in planes flown to them by defecting pilots, the book said.

The English-language edition of "The Untold History of Israel" by Jacques Derogy and Hesi Carmel is permeated by the intrigue behind the hits and misses of intelligence agencies in the Middle East: the American CIA, Soviet KGB, Israeli Massad, Egyptian and French

intelligence, Britain's MI-6, and others.

THE BIGGEST embarrassment of the Israeli intelligence network, the book says, was the failure to predict the 1973 "Yom Kippur war."

The book says Prime Minister Menachem Begin, then a member of the Knesset [parliament], was one of the few Israelis who doubted intelligence reports that maintained an attack was only a "remote possibility."

But Gen. Eli Zeira, chief of Israel's military intelligence, insisted war was "remote" up to the day of the attack.

The CIA, which had thought war possible 10 days earlier, meanwhile had reversed its opinion and asserted that any attempt to cross the Suez Canal was "well beyond the Egyptians' capacity," the authors said.

THE AUTHORS connected the disappearance of the 1,200-ton Israeli submarine Dakar [Swordfish], on Jan. 26, 1968,

in the Eastern Mediterranean, to the then-secret Soviet base at Marsa-Matruh.

They also described the Israeli revenge, which began when two Israeli Skyhawk jet fighters were attacked by Soviet-piloted MiGs on July 25, 1970, and the Israelis set a trap.

"Five days later, two [French-made] Mirage jets took off in the direction of the Canal, seemingly on a routine reconnaissance mission," the book says. "Above the Gulf of Suez, they suddenly banked in the direction of the exact spot where the two Skyhawks had been intercepted. . . . Their pilots sighted 12 MiG-21s rushing headlong at them. At that precise moment, the trap . . . closed. Eight Phantom jet fighters suddenly nosedived into the fray."

Five MiGs were downed; all Israeli planes returned to base. A week later, Russian pilots were withdrawn from the Canal Zone.