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# Israelis Choose Silence In Response to Spy Plea

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JERUSALEM, June 6 — Two days after an American caught spying for Israel pleaded guilty in Washington, officials here are withholding public comment on the case, apparently in the hope that the scandal will eventually blow over.

Neither Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir nor Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin have had any formal comment on the plea, which was entered by Jonathan Jay Pollard, a former United States Navy intelligence analyst.

The Israeli leadership has also declined to offer any comment on, or explanation of, the naming of four other Israelis as unindicted co-conspirators in the Pollard case. The four include one of the rising stars of the Israeli Air Force, Brig. Gen. Aviam Sella, the commander of the Ramon Air Force Base in southern Israel.

## Confidence in Shaken

Middle-ranking Israeli officials, who were told by their superiors in December that Israel had fully cooperated with the United States and had made a full disclosure to the American investigative team led by the State Department's legal adviser, Abraham D. Sofaer, say now that they are no longer sure they know the full extent of the Pollard affair.

One possible explanation being discussed is that senior Israeli officials did not reveal all that they knew about the Pollard espionage ring during their discussions with American investigators. Another possibility is that Rafael Eitan, the Israeli official who led the Pollard espionage operation, continued to hide some aspects of the affair from his superiors even after he was dismissed and during his interrogation by American legal authorities.

In any event, with the officials at the very top refusing to comment, those below are clearly uncertain as to what is the truth. This is particularly so regarding the question of how one of the top figures in the Israeli Air Force could have been involved in what the Israeli Cabinet has termed a "rogue" espionage operation.

"At this stage we just hope the whole thing will blow over and that there will be no new surprises," a senior Government official said.

Until now, Israeli news organizations

have not been insistent that the political echelon account to the public for what happened in the Pollard affair. From the start of the scandal, there has been no real sense of outrage among Israel's journalists or the society's leaders.

The general mood has been dominated by the assumption that every nation spies on every other nation and that Israel's error was to get caught. It was against this backdrop that Mr. Eitan, far from being punished for his involvement in the affair, was given one of the most lucrative Government jobs, the chairmanship of the board of Israel Chemicals, a state-owned industrial organization.

Lately, however, some Israeli news organizations have started to ask questions with broad implications. The left-of-center newspaper Davar said today:

"All attempts to obtain an official response or information about the background of Aviam Sella, who is mentioned in Pollard's indictment, were met with stubborn silence. The questions on the agenda remain as follows: Did the Israel Defense Forces or Israeli Air Force senior command know about Sella's involvement in spying? Is the absence of knowledge and coordination a lesson requiring conclusions to be drawn and implemented?"

## Other Recent Scandals

The Israeli public seems to have been left numb by the revelations in the Pollard case, which is the latest of a series of recent scandals that have raised questions about the accountability of the country's leadership.

In the last month, the heads of all of Israel's major banks have been forced to resign in connection with a huge stock market scandal. In addition, the head of Shin Beth, Israel's domestic intelligence service, has been the subject of reports that he tampered with evidence, altered testimony and influenced witnesses in order to cover up his purported involvement in the killing of two captured Palestinian bus hijackers in April 1984.

On Thursday, one of Israel's most important contractors, Abraham Gindi, who was being investigated in connection with a variety of large-scale land frauds on the West Bank and various building scandals, walked into his empty swimming pool, poured gasoline over his head and immolated himself.