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# When Do Spies Go Too Far?

## Two security scandals embarrass Israel

**S**pying on your best friend? Killing captured terrorists, then sweeping the deaths under the carpet? Whatever has happened to Israel's vaunted intelligence and security agencies? In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Shimon Peres now finds himself grappling with two separate but highly embarrassing security scandals. The first is the case of Jonathan Jay Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst who pleaded guilty last week to selling U.S. secrets to Israel. The second turns on charges that the director of Shin Bet, Israel's FBI, may have ordered interrogators to kill two young Palestinian terrorists captured after a bus hijacking in 1984—then covered up the deaths. The scandals raised an unpleasant question: did these covert operations run wild under Israeli officials who regarded the rule of law as less important than security?

Peres has insisted that the Pollard affair was a "rogue operation" that violated Israel's "standing rules" against spying on America. But the case has already jarred relations between Washington and Jerusalem. Although aides said Secretary of State George Shultz still is of a mind to give Israel the benefit of the doubt in the matter, some White House and Justice Department officials appeared less inclined to do so. They concurred with FBI Director William Webster, who said that Israel had given only "selective cooperation" in the investigation of Pollard, 31, and his wife, Anne Henderson Pollard, who pleaded guilty to two lesser felony charges. Angered by such barbs, Israeli officials privately accused the Justice Department of waging a "malevolent" campaign to discredit Israel.

**Promotion list:** The Peres government did disband the small Defense Ministry intelligence unit that allegedly ran Pollard. But it subsequently promoted two of the four Israelis cited by a grand jury as unindicted coconspirators—Raphael Eitan, a veteran Israeli intelligence agent, who helped kidnap Adolf Eichmann in Argentina in 1960 and who oversaw the Pollard operation, and Col. Aviem Sella, an Israeli Air Force officer who is said to have led the raid

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against the Baghdad nuclear reactor in 1981 and who was a graduate student at New York University when Pollard began spying. Eitan now heads Israel Chemicals Ltd., the country's largest state-run industrial enterprise. Sella, now a brigadier general, commands a large American-built airfield in the Negev.

No less a friend than New York Times columnist William Safire tore into Israel last week. "Rafi Eitan is a hero, almost a legend, in Israel," wrote Safire. "Aviem Sella may also be a hero . . . For the last couple of years, however, these two authentic heroes appear to have been engaged in an activity that is bringing shame and dishonor on their country: hiring a couple of Americans to steal secrets from the nation Israel must depend upon for its survival." Was it really possible that no high-ranking Israeli officials were aware of the spy operation? And if they did know, why did they do nothing to stop it?

**Classified documents:** Those questions may never be fully answered. But there was no doubt that Pollard—whose plea bargain spares him from a maximum sentence of life in prison—was a productive spy. Using his top-secret clearance as a civilian counterterrorism analyst for the Navy, Pollard obtained hundreds of highly classified U.S. military documents and slipped them to his Israeli handlers in Washington. The documents included satellite photos, secret military and intelligence studies of a number of foreign countries and documents relating to mine warfare and to Warsaw Pact military technology.

Pollard—who is Jewish—chose to spy for Israel, according to his attorney, Richard Hibey, because he is "a passionate anticommunist and antiterrorist [who] also believes in the Israeli state." His Israeli sponsors paid him a retainer of from \$1,500 to \$2,500 a month, promised to deposit \$30,000 a year for him in a Swiss bank account over a 10-year period and guaranteed that he could live in Israel under the new name of Danny Cohen when the contract was finished. Sella—Pollard's original handler—even gave him a diamond and sapphire ring worth more than \$6,000 as a present for his wife.

But Pollard's colleagues in naval intelligence became suspicious about his interest in classified documents not related to his own immediate specialty. When federal investigators stopped him for questioning last Nov. 18, he knew it was time to come in from the cold. Three days later he and his wife went to the Israeli Embassy to seek asylum. There they were intercepted by FBI agents and placed under arrest.

The Shin Bet scandal also raised serious moral questions in Israel. The controversy began after the Defense Ministry announced that two Palestinian terrorists had died of wounds during a commando assault

in April 1984 on the bus they had hijacked near the Gaza Strip. That version was debunked by an Israeli photographer whose censored pictures showed one of the hijackers being led away—dazed but with no visible injuries. Last February three Shin Bet officials called on Israeli Attorney General Yitzhak Zamir and told him that Avraham Shalom, Shin Bet's director, had conducted a massive cover-up of the killings. But Peres and his cabinet ministers strenuously opposed any probe of the affair "for reasons of state security." When Zamir tried to proceed with an investigation anyway, Peres fired him. There was even talk that Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir—who was prime minister at the time—may have sanctioned the killings and subsequently authorized Shalom to organize a cover-up. Asked recently whether he knew

about Shin Bet's role in the hijacking incident, Shamir replied: "I knew what a prime minister had to know."

Washington and Jerusalem hoped to contain the damage of the Pollard affair. There were fears it could damage the special relationship between U.S. and Israeli intelligence communities. "There's an old saw in the intelligence business that there aren't any friends," said one senior operative. "There are degrees of enemies. But there aren't any friends."

Even now the Pentagon has notified the Israelis that it is "reconsidering" a visit that Moshe Levy, Israel's chief of staff, was to make late this month. Whether suspicions ease or grow worse may depend on the information that Pollard has agreed to give the government.

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