



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 8, 2026

Massie Demands Investigation of Israeli Attack on USS Liberty

America First GOP Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky urged the U.S. House today to pass a resolution honoring the survivors of the Israeli attack on the USS *Liberty* 59 years ago. He also urged Congress to investigate the matter.

Massie called the brutal attack on the nearly defenseless intelligence-gathering ship — which left 34 Americans dead and 171 wounded — “intentional murder.”

Top American officials, including the late Admiral Thomas Moorer, chief of naval operations at the time, claimed that President Lyndon B. Johnson covered up the truth about the attack.



U.S. Navy/Public Domain
USS Liberty following attack by Israel on June 8, 1967

59 years ago today, Israel attacked the USS Liberty in international waters. 34 crew members were killed and 174 were wounded by the IDF.

Today, I spoke on the House floor to honor the fallen and to recognize the survivors who were present in the gallery. pic.twitter.com/DK7WUFnKve

— Thomas Massie (@RepThomasMassie) [June 8, 2026](#)

The Attack

In the synopsis of its documentary on the attack, [Sacrificing Liberty](#), the ship’s veterans association says it was deliberate.

The ship was sailing in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of the Sinai Peninsula on June 8, 1967. Its mission: collect signals intelligence. The ship flew an American flag and was otherwise clearly marked.

“The attack was preceded by more than six hours of intense low-level surveillance by Israeli photo reconnaissance aircraft, which buzzed the ship as low as 200 feet directly overhead,” the [association website says](#):

The carefully orchestrated assault that followed was initiated by high-performance jet aircraft. This was followed by slower and more maneuverable jets carrying napalm, and was finally turned over to lethal torpedo boats, which blasted a forty-foot hole in the ship’s side. The attack lasted more than two hours, deliberately killing 34 Americans and wounding at least 171 others. Over 821 rockets, cannon and machine gun holes were inflicted. When the Liberty stubbornly remained afloat despite her damage, Israeli forces machine-gunned her



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life rafts, firefighters, stretcher bearers, and sent ... helicopters to finish the job, no survivors were to be taken. This is no short of a war crime.

Fighter jets sent to defend the ship from two American aircraft carriers, the USS *America* and USS *Saratoga*, were recalled.

Recalling the aircraft, [Moorer wrote](#) for the *Houston Chronicle* in 2004, "was the most disgraceful act I witnessed in my entire military career."

As well, "Israeli reconnaissance aircraft closely studied the Liberty during an eight-hour period prior to the attack, one flying within 200 feet of the ship," the former [Joint Chiefs chairman wrote](#):

Weather reports confirm the day was clear with unlimited visibility. The Liberty was a clearly marked American ship in international waters, flying an American flag and carrying large U.S. Navy hull letters and numbers on its bow.

Despite claims by Israeli intelligence that they confused the Liberty with a small Egyptian transport, the Liberty was conspicuously different from any vessel in the Egyptian navy. It was the most sophisticated intelligence ship in the world in 1967. With its massive radio antennae, including a large satellite dish, it looked like a large lobster and was one of the most easily identifiable ships afloat.

Israel attempted to prevent the Liberty's radio operators from sending a call for help by jamming American emergency radio channels.

Israeli torpedo boats machine-gunned lifeboats at close range that had been lowered to rescue the most seriously wounded.

Moorer also pointed to the testimony of the late Ward Boston, the top lawyer on the Navy panel that investigated the attack. At a news conference in 2004, he revealed that President Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara ordered the Navy to cover up the truth.

"Johnson and McNamara told those heading the Navy's inquiry to 'conclude that the attack was a case of "mistaken identity" despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary,'" [The Associated Press reported](#) about the news conference:

Boston was senior legal counsel to the Navy's original 1967 review of the attack. He said in the sworn statement that he stayed silent for years because he's a military man, and "when orders come ... I follow them."

Massie's Speech

Like many Americans, notably the *Liberty* survivors, Massie wants answers. And he said so today, the 59th anniversary of the attack.

"The visibility was unlimited" that day, Massie said:

The American Flag was flying proudly on the USS *Liberty*. ... Planes came from Israel to surveil the boat ... and they thought they were in good shape. But what happened next surprised them all, French Mirage jets showed up and for 25 minutes strafed and attacked.



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... They shot rockets. They shot 30-mm cannons into the hull and into the ship. They even dropped napalm on the bridge of the ship. This was an effort to kill everybody on board.

Then torpedo boats attacked. Three of them launched four torpedoes, one of which smashed into the hull and killed 25 crewmen. The Israelis were "intent on not having a single survivor." Massie continued:

According to eyewitness accounts, the Israelis machine-gunned the life boats that they put down. They machine-gunned the firefighters who were on the deck.

Despite reports that the attack "was a case of mistaken identity," top officials including then-Secretary of State Dean Rusk, CIA Director Richard Helms, and Bobby Ray Inman, head of the National Security Agency, along with Boston and Moorer, believe the attack was deliberate. It "was intentional murder by the country of Israel, either as a false-flag operation or because they simply didn't want anybody observing what they were doing that day," Massie said.

Massie did not mention that [Captain William McGonagle](#) received the Medal of Honor for his heroism in saving the ship and its crew after being severely wounded. McGonagle received the decoration not from Johnson at the White House, as was customary, but from Navy Secretary Paul Ignatius at the Washington Navy Yard.

[His citation says](#) he received the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. It does not name the country that attacked the *Liberty*.



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