

Spying on America “Out of Love for Israel”: Jonathan Pollard’s Release Imminent?

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Reports indicate Washington intends releasing Pollard as a sop to Israel – perhaps a teaspoon of sugar to help the Iran nuclear deal go down, something Israeli hardliners running things won’t accept and are going all-out to undermine.

In 1985, Pollard was arrested, pled guilty in 1986, then sentenced in 1987 on spying for Israel charges while working as a civilian intelligence analyst for the Naval Intelligence Support Center (NISC) and Navy human intelligence (HUMINT) – part of the Navy Field Operational Intelligence Office (NFOIO), a branch of Naval Intelligence Command (NIC).



He’s the only American ever sentenced to life imprisonment for passing classified information to an ally. Customary punishment is 10 years except in cases involving a US agent’s death – or others with regard to “nuclear weaponry...war plans, communications intelligence or cryptographic information.”

According to a CIA 1987 damage assessment, Pollard wasn’t asked to spy on US military activities – just collect US information on Arab states, Soviet Russia and Pakistan, especially their key weapons systems.

Israelis asked for a signals intelligence manual. They wanted it to monitor Soviet advisers in Syria.

The CIA said Israel “never expressed interest in US military activities, plans, capabilities or equipment.”

Pollard voluntarily supplied more than his handlers requested – over 1,500 daily Middle East and North Africa Summar(ies) (MENAS), Mediterranean Littoral Intelligence Summar(ies) (MELOS), Indian Ocean Littoral Intelligence Summar(ies), plus over 800 other stolen documents.

The CIA suggested his personal life and professional behavior warranted alerting his superiors about a potential security risk. US officials said documents he stole would have measured 6 x 6 feet wide and 10 feet tall - a huge amount of information Israel found invaluable. It didn't admit paying Pollard for services rendered until 1998.

It made repeated attempts to secure his release - unsuccessful until perhaps now. It granted Pollard citizenship in 1995 - what's near automatically afforded all Jews wishing to emigrate.

Reports suggest Pollard could be free in weeks - or possibly be delayed until after his scheduled November parole hearing. His last one was in early July. His lawyer, Eliot Lauer, said he's gotten no parole commission feedback so far.

US and Israeli officials are largely tight-lipped on what may or may not be planned. A White House spokesperson referred questions to the Justice Department. Its spokesperson declined to comment - as did Mark Regev representing Netanyahu.

US sentencing laws require parole consideration for convicted felons. Many are turned down - especially individuals authorities want kept locked up.

Obama commented on Pollard's case last year, saying:

"I have no plans for releasing Jonathan Pollard immediately, but what I am going to be doing is to make sure that he, like every other American who's been sentenced, is accorded the same kinds of review and the same examination of the equities that any other individual would provide."

Release ahead of a parole hearing usually requires special intervention or deteriorating health. Pollard has numerous ailments, perhaps sufficient reason to release him.

At the same time, his case is so high-profile, freeing him will require federal authorization. Parole board members will rubber-stamp their decision.

When sentenced, Reagan Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger said it was hard imagining "greater harm to national security than that caused by" Pollard - hyperbole perhaps because he stole plenty before getting caught.

Throughout his imprisonment, Justice Department, CIA and FBI officials opposed releasing him. His chance now is much greater than earlier - especially after over three decades in prison.

Pollard is a national hero in Israel. When US officials visit, "Free Pollard" signs line their motorcade route. They're pressed to get him released.

Former Israeli ambassador to Washington, Michael Oren said his release if forthcoming "will not change in any way our position on the nuclear deal."

Pollard claimed he spied out of love for Israel. He was well paid for his efforts. If Obama wants him released, he'll be freed - not without flack from bipartisan hardliners like Senator/Republican presidential aspirant Lindsey Graham saying his release "would be nothing more than a pathetic attempt by a weak administration to curry favor with our

Israeli allies who across the board reject this dangerous deal with Iran.”

Spokesman for former senator/2nd time presidential aspirant Rick Santorum said releasing Pollard won't “compensate for the tremendous damage the Obama administration has done to Israeli-American relations and the damage the Iran deal poses.”

If released as expected, Pollard will likely emigrate to Israel. He'll get considerable help to build a new life in a welcoming environment.

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