

The CIA's 1987 Damage Assessment Declassified: The Jonathan Pollard Spy Case

New Details on What Secrets Israel Asked Pollard to Steal

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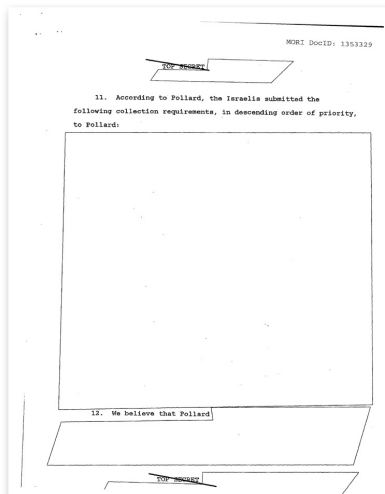
Edited by Jeffrey T. Richelson

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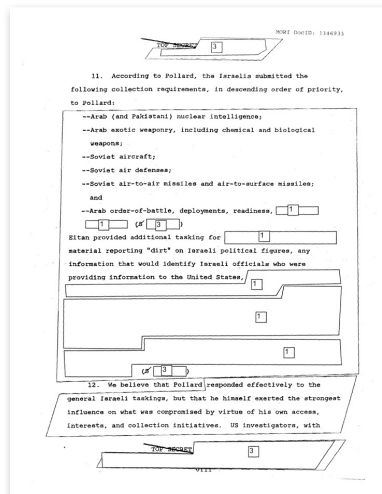
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Washington, DC, December 14, 2012 - When Naval Investigative Service analyst Jonathan Pollard spied for Israel in 1984 and 1985, his Israeli handlers asked primarily for nuclear, military and technical information on the Arab states, Pakistan, and the Soviet Union - not on the United States - according to the newly-declassified CIA 1987 damage assessment of the Pollard case, published today by the National Security Archive at George Washington University (www.nsarchive.org).

The [damage assessment](#) includes new details on the specific subjects and documents sought by Pollard's Israeli handlers (pages 36-43), such as Syrian drones and central communications, Egyptian missile programs, and Soviet air defenses. The Israelis specifically asked for a signals intelligence manual that they needed to listen in on Soviet advisers in Syria. The document describes how Pollard's handler, Joseph Yagur, told him to ignore a request, from Yagur's boss, for U.S. "dirt" on senior Israeli officials and told Pollard that gathering such information would terminate the operation (page 38).



Released in 2006



Released in 2012

Under the heading “What the Israelis Did Not Ask For,” the assessment remarks (page 43) that they “never expressed interest in US military activities, plans, capabilities, or equipment.”

The assessment also notes that Pollard volunteered delivery of three daily intelligence summaries that had not been requested by his handlers, but which proved useful to them, and ultimately handed over roughly 1,500 such messages from the Middle East and North Africa Summary (MENAS), the Mediterranean Littoral Intelligence Summary (MELOS), and the Indian Ocean Littoral Intelligence Summary, in addition to the more than 800 compromised documents on other subjects that Pollard delivered to the Israelis in suitcases.

The damage assessment also features a detailed 21-page chronology of Pollard’s personal life and professional career, including his work for the Israelis, highlighting more than a dozen examples of unusual behavior by Pollard that the CIA suggests should have, in retrospect, alerted his supervisors that he was a security risk. Prominent on the list were false statements by Pollard during a 1980 assignment with Task Force 168, the naval intelligence element responsible for HUMINT collection. Pollard is now serving a life sentence in prison for espionage.

The CIA denied release of most of the [Pollard damage assessment](#) in 2006, claiming for example that pages 18 through 165 were classified in their entirety and not a line of those pages could be released. The Archive appealed the CIA’s decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel, established by President Clinton in 1995 and continued by Presidents Bush and Obama. The ISCAP showed its value yet again as a check on systemic overclassification by ordering release of scores of pages from the Pollard damage assessment that were previously withheld by CIA, and published today for the first time.

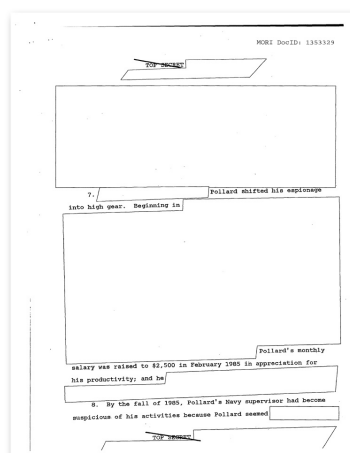
Today’s posting, edited by Archive senior fellow Jeffrey T. Richelson, includes more than a dozen other declassified documents on the Pollard case, such as the Defense Intelligence Agency biographic sketch of Pollard’s initial Israeli handler, Col. Aviam Sella. Among many other books and articles, Richelson is the author of *The U.S. Intelligence Community* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2011, 6th edition), which the *Washington Post* called “the authoritative survey of the American cloak-and-dagger establishment.”

Jonathan Pollard: Fantasist and Spy

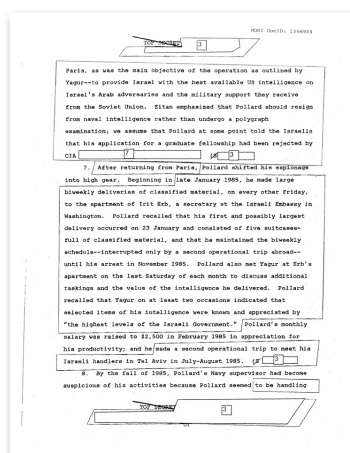
By Jeffrey T. Richelson

Nineteen-eighty-five became known as the “Year of the Spy” in the United States after a series of arrests and one defection revealed several serious penetrations of the U.S. intelligence and defense establishments by foreign intelligence services. On November 22, Larry Wu-Tai Chin, a long-time CIA employee, was taken into custody by the FBI and accused of spying for the People’s Republic of China. Two days later, former National Security Agency employee Ronald Pelton was arrested and charged with having provided the Soviet Union with details of five signals intelligence operations. Those arrests followed the apprehension, in May, of a former member of the U.S. Navy, John A. Walker, Jr., who had started turning over highly-secret documents to the KGB in 1968. And in September, before he could be arrested, former CIA officer Edward Lee Howard absconded to Moscow.¹

But no arrest was more stunning than that of Jonathan J. Pollard, a thirty-one year old analyst for the Navy’s Anti-Terrorist Alert Center (ATAC). Pollard was detained on November 21, after a futile attempt to gain access to the Washington, D.C. embassy of Israel – to one of whose intelligence services, the Scientific Liaison Bureau (LAKAM), he had been delivering a vast assortment of documents. News of Pollard’s arrest was not the first time that the issue of Israeli intelligence activities directed against U.S. targets had been in the press. That subject had been the subject of press coverage several years earlier after the CIA’s study of the organization and operations of Israel’s intelligence and security services ([Document 1](#)) had become public, after it had been recovered from the U.S. embassy in Tehran during the November 4, 1979 takeover.²



Released in 2006



Released in 2012

The outlines of Pollard’s personal and professional life, as well as details of the nature of the material he turned over to Israel became the subject of both newspaper and magazine reports, books, and official, sometimes heavily redacted, internal documents ([Document 3](#), [Document 11](#)) as well as declarations prepared for the court by both the government and defense in aid of sentencing ([Document 6](#), [Document 7](#), [Document 8](#)). Both official and media reports indicated that Pollard had first expressed his willingness to provide Israel with highly-classified documents during a late May 1984 meeting with Israeli Air Force officer Aviam Sella ([Document 2a](#), [Document 2b](#), [Document 9](#)). Until his arrest, Pollard delivered approximately 800 documents, many of which were classified top secret or codeword. In addition, he stole an estimated 1,500 current intelligence summary messages.³

The documents provided information on PLO headquarters in Tunisia; specific capabilities of Tunisian and Libyan air defense systems; Iraqi and Syrian chemical warfare productions capabilities (including detailed satellite imagery); Soviet arms shipments to Syria and other Arab states; naval forces, port facilities, and lines of communication of various Middle Eastern and North African countries; the MiG-29 fighter; and Pakistan's nuclear program. Also included was a U.S. assessment of Israeli military capabilities.⁴

Pollard's disclosures were alarming to U.S. officials for several reasons, some of which were noted in their official declarations ([Document 6](#), [Document 8](#)). One, despite the fact that both the U.S. and Israel considered each other legitimate intelligence targets, was Israel's willingness to run a human penetration operation directed at the U.S. government. Another, was the damage to the intelligence sharing arrangement with Israel - since its acquisition of material from Pollard weakened the U.S. position vis-a-vis intelligence exchanges with Israel. In addition, there was no guarantee that such documents, revealing both sources and methods as well as assessments, would not find their way to the Soviet Union via a Soviet penetration of the Israeli intelligence or defense community - as had happened with a number of other allies. Further, since Israel was a target of U.S. intelligence collection - particularly technical collection - operations, the documents could be used by Israeli counterintelligence and security organizations to help Israel neutralize or degrade U.S. collection operations.

Of all the spy cases from 1985, the Pollard case has been the one that has had the longest life in terms of media coverage - in part because of efforts, both by private citizens and the Israeli government to have his life sentence commuted. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's 1993 appeal to President Bill Clinton resulted in a letter from defense secretary Les Aspin expressing his opposition and stressing three points: the requirement to maintain control over the disclosure of intelligence to foreign governments, the damage done by Pollard's disclosures, and Pollard's alleged inclusion of classified information in letters from prison. In 1998, in an attempt to facilitate his release, the Israeli government publically acknowledged ([Document 13](#)). Pollard's role as an Israeli asset. And, former Director of Central Intelligence, George J. Tenet reports that the subject was raised by the Israeli government in 2006, and he threatened to resign if Pollard was released. As recently as January 2011, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked President Barack Obama, without success, to free Pollard.⁵

Relevant to that debate and as well as the historical record are the specifics of the Pollard's professional career, what he compromised, and the assessment of the damage from the compromised material. While some of that information has been disclosed, either officially or unofficially, much of the official record has been redacted from released documents. The recent release of a significantly less-redacted copy of the damage assessment performed by the DCI's Foreign Denial and Deception Analysis Committee ([Document 11b](#)) thus, even if it has no impact on views concerning Pollard's fate, adds significantly to the historical record concerning his activities.

Among the specific items of note in the newly released assessment are an account of Pollard's claim (p. I-18) upon his late arrival for an interview, that he spent the weekend rescuing his wife from the Irish Republican Army after they had kidnaped her. Pollard's connection with a naval intelligence unit, Task Force-168, responsible for human intelligence activities is also among the topics discussed in the damage assessment. The committee's report also provides new insight to exactly what information the Israelis wanted and

why – as well as what information they did not want (pp. 38-46), including U.S. capabilities or plans. With regard to Syria, for example, Pollard was requested to provide documents concerning a suspected research and development facility, an electronics intelligence (ELINT) system, remotely piloted vehicles, a national command, control, and communications center in Damascus, Syrian military units with attached Soviet advisors, and medical intelligence on Syrian president Hafiz al-Assad. A common denominator for Israeli requests concerning Syria and other countries was the predominant focus on military intelligence relevant to Israeli security.

The study also describes (on p. 38) an incident involving LAKAM chief Rafi Eitan, in which he requested documents or information from Pollard on a variety of topics. According to Pollard, his case officer, standing behind Pollard, shook his head “no” in response to many of Eitan’s requests – including those for information on the PLO’s Force 17, CIA psychological studies or other intelligence containing ‘dirt’ on senior Israeli officials, as well as information identifying the “rats” in Israel (by which he apparently meant Israelis who provided information to the United States).

The study also reports (p. 60) on Israeli use of the NSA’s RASIN (Radio Signal Notation) manual, which was requested on at least two occasions, in assisting its monitoring of a communications link between the Soviet General Staff and the Soviet military assistance group in Damascus.

THE DOCUMENTS

[Document 1](#): Central Intelligence Agency, *Foreign Intelligence and Security Services: Israel*, March 1979. Secret.

Source: <http://niqnaq.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/cia-1979-israel-foreign-intelligence-security-services.pdf>

This 47-page study of the Israeli intelligence was part of an ongoing effort by the CIA’s Counterintelligence Staff to prepare surveys of foreign intelligence communities of interest. It covers the functions, organizations, administrative practices, and methods of operation of the Mossad, Shin Bet, and AMAN (Military Intelligence) as well as discussing the Foreign Ministry’s intelligence unit and the national police. Notably absent from the study is any mention of LAKAM, the unit which was responsible for running Jonathan Pollard.

[Document 2a](#): Department of Defense, Report Number: 6 849 0139 79, March 12, 1979. Classification Redacted.

[Document 2b](#): Defense Intelligence Agency, IR 6 849 0557 79, LTC. AVI SELLA, – BIO REPORT, October 18, 1979 .Classification Redacted.

Source: Freedom of Information Act Release.

These reports are part of the continuing collection of biographic information by Defense and military service intelligence units on foreign military leaders, including those below the level of general. [Document 2b](#) notes Sella’s current position, his physical description, family, and military career.

[Document 3](#): [Deleted], Deputy Director of Security, Personnel Security and Investigations, Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum for: The Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Subject: Jonathan Jay Pollard, January 2, 1986. Secret.

Source: Freedom of Information Act Release.

This memo provides details on Pollard's activities during a June 1984 visit to the CIA, including his attendance at a briefing on anti-terrorism efforts and his access to documents.

[Document 4](#): William Taft, Deputy Secretary of Defense, "Damage Assessment - Pollard Espionage Case," February 13, 1986.

Source: Editor's Collection.

This brief memo notes, in relation to the Pollard damage assessment, that any documents acknowledging the fact that the U.S. gathered intelligence against specific non-Soviet Bloc nations should be classified, at a minimum, CONFIDENTIAL - NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS.

[Document 5](#): [Deleted], Counterintelligence Branch, Special Activities Division, Central Intelligence Agency, Subject: Recent Meeting on Pollard Case, July 8, 1986. Secret.

Source: Freedom of Information Act Release.

This memo reports on a meeting which focused on the desire of Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to be able to communicate to the U.S. District Court his perception of the extent of damage resulting from Pollard's espionage activities and provides details on support to be provided in production of the affidavit.

[Document 6](#): Caspar Weinberger, Declaration of the Secretary of Defense, United States of America v. Jonathan Jay Pollard, 1986. Secret.

Source: Editor's Collection

This heavily redacted declaration by Secretary of Defense Weinberger, prepared to influence the judge's sentencing decision, discusses the damage to national security (including to intelligence sharing arrangement), and the significance of the disclosures (including harm to U.S. foreign policy, the compromise of sources and methods, and the risk to U.S. personnel).

[Document 7](#): Robert A. Hibey and Gordon A. Coffee, "Defendant Jonathan J. Pollard's Second Memorandum In Aid of Sentencing," Criminal No. 86-0207, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, March 2, 1987. Classification Not Available.

Source: irmep.org/ila/pollard/04021987Pollard_Sentencing_memo2.pdf.

This classified memorandum, from Pollard's defense team, discusses damage to the United States, Pollard's access to classified documents and his decision to provide information to Israel, his limitations on the delivery of information, Israeli payments to Pollard, charges that he repeatedly disclosed classified information to others, and the possibility of parole.

[Document 8](#): Supplemental Declaration of Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, United States of America v. Jonathan Jay Pollard, Criminal No. 86-0207, United States District Court of Columbia, March 4, 1987. Unclassified.

Source: www.irmep.org/ila/pollard/03041987weinberger.pdf.

This short declaration supplements Weinberger's more extensive classified 1986 statement ([Document 6](#)) concerning Pollard's activities, in response to Pollard's second memorandum ([Document 7](#)) in aid of sentencing.

[Document 9](#): Defense Intelligence Agency, "Biographic Sketch: Colonel Aviam Sella," May 20, 1987. Secret.

Source: Freedom of Information Act Release.

This biographic sketch is one of many routinely prepared by DIA of foreign military officials. Prepared after Pollard's arrest and U.S. protests of plans to promote Sella to commanding officer of the Tel Nov airbase, it discusses Sella's significance, provides personal data, and reviews his career from the time he joined the Israeli Air Force in 1964.

[Document 10](#): James P. Lynch, Director of Security, Central Intelligence Agency, To: Director, Public Affairs, Subject: U.S. News & World Report Story on Jonathan Pollard, May 21, 1987. Secret.

Source: Freedom of Information Act Release.

In this memo, the CIA's director of security addresses an upcoming *U.S. News & World Report* story on Pollard. The format for its two pages specifies each "expected allegation" followed by "fact." The final page discusses the suggested response to press inquiries.

Document 11 A-B: Foreign Denial and Deception Analysis Committee, Director of Central Intelligence, *The Jonathan Jay Pollard Espionage Case: A Damage Assessment*, October 30, 1987. Top Secret/Codeword.

[A](#): Released by CIA in 2006 in response to a Mandatory Declassification Review request.

[B](#): Released in 2012 by the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel in response to the Archive's appeal of CIA's 2006 withholding.

This assessment was one of two prepared in the aftermath of Pollard's arrest (the other was prepared for the Department of Defense by several naval intelligence and security organizations). Two versions of the CIA document are included here to show the amount of material the agency excised in 2006, compared with what ISCAP released in 2012.

The main body of the study examines Pollard's personal history and espionage career,

Israeli intelligence priorities and requests, material provided by Pollard, as well as losses and vulnerabilities. Supplemental tabs provide a detailed chronology and a summary of security and counterintelligence lessons learned. Portions that were redacted in 2006 are enclosed in rectangles.

[Document 12](#): Bruce Riedel, "Book Review: The Territory of Lies," *Studies in Intelligence*, 33, 3 (Fall 1989). Unclassified.

Source: CIA Historical Review Program.

This review by a senior CIA intelligence analyst focuses on what Riedel describes as "the first in-depth assessment of this case in the public arena by an Israeli." It notes that the book adds new details on LAKAM and that its "most important contribution" was "to refute the Israeli Government's official position that the Pollard operation was a rogue mission." Riedel also addresses the question of whether LAKAM would be replaced by another covert intelligence organization.

[Document 13](#): Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Government Statement on Jonathan Pollard - 12 May 1998," May 12, 1998, Unclassified.

Source: www.mfa.gov.il.

As part of an attempt to obtain Pollard's release, this note on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website acknowledges Pollard's role as an agent for the LAKAM.

[Document 14](#): National Counterintelligence Executive, *CI Reader: An American Revolution into the New Millennium, Volume 3*, n.d., accessed December 11, 2012, Unclassified (Extract)

Source: www.ncix.gov/publications/ci_references/docs/CI_Reader_vol3.pdf

This extract concerning Jonathan Pollard is drawn from a multi-volume study performed for the National Counterintelligence Executive, a component of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. It summarizes Pollard's activities, the reaction of the Israeli government, the legal consequences for Pollard, and Pollard's quest for clemency.

NOTES

[1] Jeffrey T. Richelson, *A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford, 1995), pp. 388-403.

[2] Scott Armstrong, "Israelis Have Spied on U.S. Secret Papers Show," *Washington Post*, February 1, 1982.

[3] The most significant media account on Pollard is Wolf Blitzer, *Territory of Lies: The Exclusive Story of Jonathan Jay Pollard: The American Who Spied On His Country For Israel And How He Was Betrayed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989). With regard to the count of stolen documents, see Director of Central Intelligence Foreign Denial and Deception Analysis Committee, *The Jonathan Jay Pollard Espionage Case: A Damage Assessment*, October 30, 1987, p. 45.

[4] Richelson, *A Century of Spies*, pp. 401-402.

[5] Ibid., p. 403; George J. Tenet with Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), p. 67; M.E. "Spike" Bowman, "The Drumbeats for Clemency for Jonathan Jay Pollard Reverberate Again," *Intelligencer*, Winter/Spring 2011, pp. 7-10; Jonathan S. Tobin, "The Pollard Spy Case, 25 Years Later," *Commentary*, March 2011, pp. 37-43.

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