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Jonathan Pollard's release shows that Israel is unrepentant about spying on its 'allies'



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On the evening of 18 November, 1985, Jay, an innocent-looking analyst, left his office at the US Naval Intelligence.

Jay was in his early thirties, looked slightly overweight, sported a very eighties moustache and wore thick glasses. Heading home for the evening, he took with him a ream of classified documents.

Before heading out, he had called his wife Anne and told her he'd be home soon. The couple were due to meet some Israeli friends at a restaurant that evening.

But unbeknownst to Jay, four carloads of FBI agents and naval counterintelligence officers were waiting for him in the car park.

One of them stepped out and approached as the analyst sat down behind his steering wheel: "Jay, would you please step out of the car and come back with us to the building?"

That young naval intelligence officer was Jonathan Pollard – known to his friends at the time by his middle name Jay.

For 18 months, Pollard had used his access to classified US documents to steal masses of top-secret US intelligence secrets, selling them onto the Israeli spy agency Mossad.

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On that cold November evening alone – the day his treason finally caught up with him – Pollard had attempted to take home no less than 60 classified

documents, twenty of which were top secret or higher.

Although he was a US citizen and not an Israeli, Pollard worked as a dedicated spy for Israel. His handler was Rafi Eitan, a leading Israeli spy chief, responsible for Israeli intelligence operations against the US. Eitan had also been responsible for the capture in 1961 of leading Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann. But in a bitter historical irony, Eitan **in 2018 recorded a supportive video** message for the Alternative for Germany, a leading neo-Nazi party that directs most of its hate against Muslims.

Despite unsuccessfully seeking asylum in the Israeli embassy, Pollard was sentenced to life in prison for treason against his country of birth, ultimately serving 30 years behind bars.

After decades of high-level political lobbying by leading Israeli politicians, and over the objections of US intelligence professionals, in 2015 President Barack Obama released Pollard.

Israeli tactics to convince the US to release the pro-Israel spy over the years included outright blackmail.

In the late 1990s, Netanyahu told the then US President Bill Clinton that his agents had overheard and recorded Clinton discussing his affair with young intern Monica Lewinsky and asked for Pollard to be released.

The not-so-subtle threat was a clear attempt to blackmail Clinton into submission. **According to one account**, a "stricken" Clinton agreed to release the

traitor, but was overruled by George Tenet, the CIA chief at the time.

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Obama apparently had no such qualms. And now, in the dying days of his presidency, Trump has agreed to allow Pollard to leave the US.

In November, Pollard's parole came to an end, releasing him from the restrictions that were until then preventing him from migrating to Israel. Last month, he arrived in Tel Aviv to start a new life there.

He and his second wife Esther were warmly greeted on the tarmac by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The pair were flown from the US state of New Jersey on a luxurious private jet owned by billionaire casino magnate Sheldon Adelson and his wife, Miriam. The Adelsons are the top "sugar-daddy and sugar-momma" of the pro-Israel lobby in the US, and were also the top financial backers of Trump's electoral campaigns.

Pollard has re-invented himself since his arrest as a dedicated Zionist, and a *cause célèbre* of the Israeli far-right (although the Israeli supposed leftist and "dove" Shimon Peres also lobbied the US for his release).

But in reality, Pollard had a far more basic motivation for his crimes: cold hard cash. The secrets he stole for the Israelis were richly rewarded with payments of cash stuffed into envelopes.

According to *Territory of Lies* (a book about Pollard by Wolf Blitzer, who was then a *The Jerusalem Post* correspondent), Pollard was even gifted a \$10,000 **diamond and sapphire ring** for Anne, the woman who would become his wife.

Anne had admired the ring in the window of a Paris jewellers during a trip to France, during which Pollard met with his Israeli handlers away from the eyes of US counterintelligence. The Israelis paid cash for the ring. Anne served three years in jail as an accomplice to Pollard's crimes. Despite her loyalty, however, Pollard divorced her without even discussing it first, hooking up with Esther, who was running a campaign for Pollard's release.

According to Ron Olive, the naval counterintelligence officer who cracked the case, Pollard's main motive was more financial than ideological.

Speaking to the *BBC World Service* in 2012, he said: "What was motivating Jonathan Pollard was the number one thing that has motivated people to turn traitor and betray their country for decades and centuries: greed, money. And now though, now he pretends that it was for the love of Israel only, and now he has tens of thousands of supporters trying to get him out of jail."

According to Olive, Pollard: "Stole so many documents, so highly classified, more so than any other spy in the history of this country in such a short time."

In 2019, a **very credible report in *Politico* revealed** that US counterintelligence had exposed an attempt by the Israelis to spy on Trump using

phone mast technology. It's unclear whether or not this attempt succeeded.

The case of Jonathan Pollard shows that although Israel often acts as a client for US imperial interests, it is by no means a simple puppet of the US. In fact, Israel is considered one of the top threats by US counterintelligence officers.

Although Netanyahu vehemently denies it, and the Israelis even have the *chutzpah* to smear those who criticise its spying on the US as "anti-Semites", it's quite obvious that Israel frequently spies on its supposedly eternal ally in Washington DC - even on Republican presidents like Trump.

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