

NEW REPUBLIC
13 April 1987ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 15

POLLARD II

I SPY, YOU SPY

THERE'S A NEW wrinkle in the story of espionage between the United States and Israel. In recent years, U.S. intelligence has occasionally "planted" agents in Volunteers for Israel, a program in which thousands of private American citizens, mostly Jews, have spent about a month informally serving in the Israel Defense Forces. These volunteers perform menial but essential chores on army bases across the country. Israel gets cheap labor, and the volunteers feel they have made a personal contribution to Israel's security. But according to two well-placed U.S. sources, elements in the American intelligence community (not necessarily the Central Intelligence Agency, I was told) thought that agents posing as "volunteers" could pick up some useful tidbits of information about Israel's military. It is unclear whether they managed to do so.

It now seems that such spying among friends is more common than citizens of the two countries might have thought. Of course, the major revelation in the ongoing saga of U.S.-Israeli spying was the Jonathan Jay Pollard affair—in which an American Jew was convicted of passing massive amounts of classified U.S. intelligence information to Israel. That crisis recently re-erupted with Israel's decision to promote air force Col. Aviem Sella, who was indicted by a U.S. grand jury on charges that he "ran" Pollard.

And the Volunteers for Israel revelation comes only a few days after Republican Senator David Durenberger of Minnesota, the former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, let slip a few details about a more serious operation. Speaking to American Jewish political activists in Palm Beach, Florida, on March 15, Durenberger said that the CIA had "changed the rules of the game" in 1982 by authorizing an operation to penetrate Israel's military-intelligence community. Durenberger said that this decision apparently led to Israel's decision to run Pollard in Washington.

Six days after Durenberger's remarks, a *Washington Post* report by John Goshko and Bob Woodward confirmed that the United States has spied on Israel. It quoted two sources in Washington as saying that an Israeli military officer "who was unhappy with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon volunteered to provide limited, classified information to the U.S. government." The story says both governments had pledged not to recruit spies in each other's country, but also acknowledge that they can't refuse unsolicited "walk-ins"—such as Pollard himself—who volunteer potentially sensitive information.

According to the *Post* story, the Washington sources said the officer gave the United States "classified material" that was "not dramatic but useful" in a relationship that lasted until 1984. One of the *Post's* sources said he didn't know why the relationship was terminated. But Durenberger

suggested the officer had been "bumped" by the Israeli Defense Force, and implied that the soldier was an American Jew who had emigrated to Israel, eventually working his way up through the ranks of the IDF.

At first Israeli leaders did not know how to react to Durenberger's comments. Their initial response was to deny them. Durenberger's allegations, if true, would reduce the negative fallout from the Pollard affair, but to confirm that the operation was a response to a CIA move would blow the Israelis' cover story that Pollard was part of an unauthorized "rogue" unit. Israel's intelligence community, moreover, would understandably be reluctant to acknowledge that it had been penetrated. Also, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has issued an official denial of Durenberger's account.

Pollard, for his part, has said that he refused to provide his Israeli "handlers" with the names of American agents in Israel or with details of the National Security Agency's high-tech intelligence gathering in Israel. Rafael Eitan, the master spy who was in charge of running Pollard, was described as "obsessed" with the need to obtain this kind of information. Eitan, a close political associate of hard-line Israeli Cabinet minister Ariel Sharon, also tried to get Pollard to dig up any "dirt" the United States might have on other Israeli politicians. But Pollard has insisted that he refused that request, which enraged Eitan.

WHAT DOES all this espionage among allies signify? One inescapable conclusion is that Israel's famous chutzpah can be a source of weakness as well as strength. It has enabled the country to survive in a very dangerous part of the world. Yet it has also engendered a widely held attitude among Israeli officials that Israel can get away with the most outrageous things—such as putting out a cover story about a "rogue" intelligence unit and then promoting the allegedly renegade operatives. And many of these same cocky Israeli officials also have apparently convinced themselves that their covert skills are such that they can pull off a strategic opening to "moderates" in Iran and the freeing of American hostages in Lebanon.

There is a notion among some senior Israeli officials that many of their American counterparts are not too bright—that they can be "handled," thanks largely to the pro-Israel lobby's clout in Congress. And the political leadership in Israel generally has disdain for the American Jewish community, despite the enormous financial and political support it has given Israel over the years. Israeli officials are convinced that, in the end, the politically active Jewish leadership in the United States would not set itself against Israeli policy. The U.S. government and American Jewish leaders have reinforced this haughty attitude in Israel.

Both American Jews and the U.S. government have benefited from their close association with Israel. Israel has often been a real source of pride for Jews and a strategic asset for the United States. Most agree that in the area of intelligence sharing, the United States has received more than it has provided. But in the Pollard spy scandal—even if the United States did break the rules first—Israel demon-

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strated a reckless disregard for American Jewry and the American government, as well as for its own long-term interests. In the U.S.-Israeli relationship, Israel, after all, is still the junior partner.

And now officials in both countries are bracing for what may be the next source of tension in the relationship: South Africa. Israel recently announced a ban on new arms deals with the apartheid regime, but some American officials are skeptical that these "sanctions" will have much practical effect. Israel is clearly trying to pre-empt an administration report to Congress on foreign military sales to South Africa. That report, which is expected to name Israel as a "prime" arms supplier to the regime, will be submitted in April. It is also expected to name several other U.S. allies as weapons suppliers to South Africa, including, says one U.S. official, "half of Europe." But Israel is believed to be the only one of these countries that receives military grants from the United States, and is thus eligible for the aid cutoff suggested in last year's South Africa sanctions law.

Such a cutoff isn't likely. What worries the Israelis is that the classified version of the report (as opposed to the less detailed summary that will be made public) will be rough on their government, and will contain many specific details of Israel's military relationship with South Africa. They fret that the document might be leaked to the media, further damaging Israel's image in America, which is exactly what Israel doesn't need in the aftermath of the Pollard spy scandal and the Iran arms affair.

Serious as they are, these strains will probably be short-lived, especially as the 1988 U.S. election campaigns heat up. Don't expect Congress to cut the \$3 billion aid package for Israel. On the other hand, Israel may not win the favorable long-term debt restructuring schedule it has been quietly lobbying for. This is not the best Washington climate for handing out more favors to Israel.

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