


Pollard still toxic for Israel-American relations

Those who consider Israel has a 'moral obligation' to former prisoner 09185-016 can get busy privately fundraising for him. But Israel's government should take no part in it.

By Barbara Opall-Rome | Nov. 22, 2015 | 2:05 PM |  4

Now that Jonathan Pollard is out of prison, the Israeli government and grassroots activists will be seeking to remove the residual shackles that are preventing this paroled U.S. felon from living the rest of his life as a free man in Israel, his adopted homeland.

This is understandable and even welcome.

After 30 years, it's time for closure for Mr. Pollard as well as for the lingering stain he and his Israeli handlers have injected deep into the fabric of U.S.-Israel ties.

But just as Pollard deserves a new lease on life, having done his time for the high crime of betraying his country, so, too, should the U.S. be spared the post-traumatic stress of being reminded of his treason.

That means no Israeli streets or town squares named for the former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst. It means no special addresses in the Israeli Knesset or at the President's Residence for the man who sold secrets to Israel's number one friend and ally.

It also means that any think tank or institution that chooses to employ Mr. Pollard must be willing to accept the very real consequence

that no U.S. official or elected U.S. representative will ever grace their symposia or policy conferences. And most of all, it means that legislation – such as that proposed by Likud Party lawmaker David Bitan – funding anything beyond the standard medical insurance provided to all citizens could very well trigger reductions in annual U.S. security assistance to Israel. There are enough non-official organizations out there to make good on what Bitan has described as Israel’s “moral obligation” to Pollard. But there is only one official organ – the government of Israel – that has the obligation to rehabilitate and fortify the so-called unbreakable, unshakable ties that bind the Jewish state to its preeminent patron. At a time when the Israeli

government is imploring Washington to pony up billions more in U.S. grant aid through 2027, Pollard's pension and hardship bonuses are the last thing both sides need sullyng the bilateral agenda.

At a time when the U.S. and Israel must augment intelligence sharing over a broad spectrum of very real threats, the former prisoner who stole suitcases of American secrets over a protracted period for financial gain and glory must remain a very low-signature blip on the public radar.

As much as many in Israel view Pollard as a Prisoner of Zion; a hostage to the nefarious whims of an anti-Semitic U.S. political and justice system, this cause celebre is not a hero. On the contrary, due in large part to the serious missteps of

his Israeli handlers at the time, Pollard is a tragic anti-hero and an enduring insult to patriotic, law-abiding American Zionists like me. Yes, Mr. Pollard must be allowed to live out his days in as much dignity as can be mustered from his earlier life of ignominy.

But official Israel must accord former prisoner 09185-016 neither a hero's welcome nor hero's status should the U.S. Justice Department amend the terms of his parole and allow Israel to repatriate him to the place of his ill-earned citizenship.

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