

# Exhibit 18

## USS LIBERTY UNDER ATTACK

By Richard Carlson

May 2, 1967 Norfolk, Virginia. My wife Merlene and the 3 children, are standing on the pier, as the USS Liberty, begins to pull away for the 4 month cruise to Africa. The ship is listing heavily to starboard. Supplies and fuel must be redistributed to balance the weight. I watch my family leave, as we pulled away. I have this horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach. I actually feel seasick, and we are still within sight of the pier. Lt. Jim O'Connor has left the railing and disappeared inside. He and I graduated in the same P&R class at Correy Station in Pensacola, just a few months previous. We had been on the 1st four-month cruise and lived to tell about the initiation of becoming a shellback. But now as the ship begins to leave, I feel real panic racing through me as if an omen of something dreadful is about to happen. We cleared the harbor, sailed down the James River, and headed out to sea. As we passed the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel headed across the big pond to Africa, many of the families had gathered there to wave to us. I felt sick.

The Atlantic crossing this time was much different from our first crossing in November 1966. An Atlantic storm tossed us about like a cork on the ocean back then. Everyone barely managed to get their sea legs on that crossing. But now it seemed quite calm. Two levels below the main deck, I settled in for the trip, and began to look over the assignments in our classified spaces, where I could hear the ocean washing along the sides of the ship. Being claustrophobic, it was difficult to concentrate on the task at hand. Every day of the crossing found me topside as much as possible, trying to shake the feeling of something horrible about to happen. I confided in Red Addington and Chuck Rowley about my feelings. They suggested that the first nightmare crossing just 6 months previous was the cause of my feelings. Their answer didn't cheer me up. I kept thinking about the newspaper article Jeanne Dixon purportedly wrote about the sinking of the Liberty. Was this true? No one could give me a straight answer. Abidjan, Ivory Coast. COMSERVRON EIGHT message 240020Z May 1967 from the Joint Chiefs of Staff is received by the Liberty.

**MAKE IMMEDIATE PREPARATIONS TO GET UNDERWAY. WHEN READY FOR SEA ASAP DEPART PORT ABIDJAN AND PROCEED BEST POSSIBLE SPEED TO ROTA SPAIN TO LOAD TECHNICAL SUPPORT MATERIAL AND SUPPLIES. WHEN READY FOR SEA PROCEED TO OPERATING AREA OFF PORT SAID. SPECIFIC AREAS WILL FOLLOW.**

That ominous feeling of something horrible happening returns. We quickly depart port. Where are we going? Questions being asked. Answers, most of them wrong, are being given. I find the answer in the Ops spaces. Rota, Spain! We arrive there on June 1st, after 8 days of hard sailing. We tie up at the pier, and take on fuel and stores. Liberty call! I want off badly. Not much to see except the base, and we are restricted because of sailing time constraints. First the exchange and then the club.

The returning crew is rowdy expelling all of the ghosts and feelings of this mission by cleaning up the base and town. The movie Mr. Roberts came to mind as the crew returns bloodied, disheveled, and ready for action. Fortunately, there was no goat accompanying them.

We clear the Strait of Gibraltar in the late afternoon. To my left is the infamous Rock of Gibraltar. To my right, the sands of Arabia. I push my Nikon to the limit, photographing the view and shipmates standing by the rail. What memories we'll have to tell our children and grandchildren about THIS one! Everyone wanted their picture taken with the "Rock" in the background. A Soviet listening trawler attempted to block our transit. We never altered course. The trawler slipped astern of us. Another bad sign?

Traffic on the Med was busy. Freighters and ships from all nations. It was fascinating to be sailing in this arena until we spotted three Soviet destroyers matching our course and speed to the starboard of us. I recalled then, having just picked up my 2 year old Ford at the port near Istanbul, setting on the ferry as we crossed the Bosphorus Straits when the ferry boat suddenly began bouncing around and we were being jostled about. It was trying to stop! Engines reversed! Why? I looked to my left and coming right at us, a Soviet Destroyer barreling its way from the Black Sea through the Straits, out to the Aegean Sea. It missed us...barely!

We are following the northern coast of Africa, heading for our assignment. By the 3rd of June, the Soviet destroyers were gone. On June 5th I learn that war had begun in the Middle East, which would later become known to as the Six Day War.

We arrive on station. Time to go to work. Such a clear and beautiful cloudless blue-sky day. We had been sunbathing during lunchtime. Everyone wanted to go home with a tan you would die for. Some eventually would. Die, that is.

I had finished lunch, and now standing by the starboard railing, began talking with CT1 Bingham. He looked as nervous as I felt. We tried to console each other that we were basically an unarmed ship, in international waters, and that no one was going to bother with us. Neither of us sounded convincing. We couldn't seem to shake the mystery ship following us. Who was it we wondered?

During the day, I see a flying boxcar circling us low and very slow. At one point, it passes us on the port side going aft so low that I can see the pilot in his beige jumpsuit at the controls. There are contrails high up in the sky as I look up at them past the new flag flying from the ship's mast. That sick feeling began sweeping over me again, and I thought about my detailer in boot camp telling me that CTs don't go to sea. They are based on shore stations. Uh-huh! Sure!

We went through our ship's drills. The Captain announced over the 1MC that we were in a war zone and should be alert at all times. Once the drills were finished, and normal work commenced, I left the Ops spaces, made my way to my bunk, grabbed my binoculars, hooked on a telephoto to my Nikon, and made my way to the flag locker

above the bridge. Standing on the port side by the searchlight, I watched aircraft diving down upon a target on shore, miles away, dropping their bombs, and then climb back up. It was like watching a TV war movie on mute. I was still confident that we would be safe at our location in international waters. Others had climbed up to watch. Red, now on the starboard side, called to me to come over to look at the surface ships approaching us. I watched for a few minutes, and then left to return to the port side near the searchlight.

Someone came racing up the ladder from the bridge and yelling, "Get down! Get down! There's a plane coming right at us!" I looked at him and to where he was pointing. I whirled around in time to see a black object in the sky with bursts of yellow lights in front of it, and then explosions all around us. I fell to the deck, and held on to the base of the searchlight, as the aircraft swooped down low in its attack, spraying the bridge with shells, and climbed skyward. Spent shell casings were falling all over the place and I thought, strange as it seems, 'why is someone dropping shell casings on us?' I watched the aircraft climb skyward, and then another one came in from the opposite direction. My god! We're being shot at! I looked to where Red and the others were, and there wasn't much of anything left. Immediately, I got up and raced down the ladder, just as I heard someone yell, "Sound the alarm! The ship is under attack! This is no drill!" I knew I had to get to my General Quarters station in Ops, 2 levels below the main deck where I could hear water swishing along the sides of the ship. Claustrophobia was the furthest thing from my mind. The fear of dying was very real. Down another set of ladders and I'm now on the main deck, port side, running aft to get inside the ship. I never hear the aircraft as it dives down and spews its rain of death on everyone. The deck is being chewed up as I fall to the deck hugging the bulkhead, scared out of my wits. I'm still alive! I quickly look out to sea and up above. I cannot see anything. Sweat is pouring into my eyes. I wipe my eyes with the back of my hand. The sweat is red. I'm bleeding. I'm on my feet again, racing aft. I find the hatch and get inside, run to the starboard side, down the ladder and into the mess deck area. The aircraft are still attacking. It's like being inside of a metal barrel and someone throwing rocks at you. I keep ducking down as I run. I must have stepped into something. My feet are soaked. Everyone is racing to the battle stations. A shell comes through the bulkhead in front of me and out the port side. I stand there transfixed and in shock. Get going I tell myself. Get below the water line. I find the Ops door. Push the combo buttons. The door opens. I'm running down the passageway, past Bingham's station, past the "T" bird area, to the hatch in the deck, down another set of ladders, and I stumble into the P&R spaces and stand there, supported by the hatch by my desk. The binoculars and Nikon hanging loosely from my neck. Blood is running down my face. I'm sloshing around in blood, although I didn't realize it. The guys look at me in horror. Corporal Edward Rehmeier takes my arm, and sets me down on the deck by the bulkhead. I've thrown my expensive camera equipment on my desk as I would my school bag onto my bed after returning home from a long hard day of schoolwork at the age of 12. He sees that my left leg is soaked in blood. I've picked up a lot of shrapnel in that leg, and a surface wound in right above my eye in my forehead. He begins first aid. The planes keep attacking. At each pass, he shields me with his body. He is old enough to be my son. I

feel awkward about all of this. I should be protecting HIM! I hear our guns returning fire. Ack..ack..ack..ack..ack... We are terrified. All of us.

Someone is taking a hammer to the receivers and tape recorders, with a good deal of glee, I might add. There have been mid watches where I've wanted to do just that! I envy them. Emergency destruction commences. Weighted deep six bags are being filled up. How on earth are they going to lug all of that up two levels and throw them overboard with planes shooting at us, I think. There is an explosion! Then, it is quiet. Very very quiet.

Is Jeanne Dixon right? Are we going to sink?

Word is passed. Bring all wounded to the mess decks. I attempt to get up. I can't move. My leg will not support me. A litter is brought in. I'm placed in it and hauled up to the next level into the mess decks, and placed on the table. I can't seem to stop the flow of blood from my leg. I keep working the tourniquet. What am I doing wrong? Someone comes over to watch me. He knows how to do it. "Here. Do it this way!" and he walks off.

A shell comes through the starboard side and out the port sides above me. I want to get off of the table onto the deck. Someone on the other side of the mess hall, wearing a phone set, yells, "Stand by! There are fish in the water! They are shooting torpedoes at us! Stand by!" I look at him and I think, "Is he crazy? Who is firing torpedoes at us and WHY?" He warns again. One of the torpedoes finds its mark. I remember vividly the muffled explosion as it tore into the starboard side hitting the spaces I had just been lifted out of. I held onto the table. All of the overhead pipes were moving and not two of them moving in the same direction at once. The ship is lifted out of the water, and then settles down and begins to list precariously to starboard. A scene of a warship exploding from a torpedo flashes into my mind. "I've got to get out of here!" I'm thinking. The ship begins to continue to list. "We are going to roll over," I'm thinking. Word is passed. Abandon ship! Somehow, adrenalin takes hold, and we are each helping each other, some wounded beyond repair, to the ladders and to the next level, where we are stopped and told to set on the deck along the bulkheads. I'm setting in front of the door leading to a head. I can see the postal clerk's lower part of his body on the deck in the head. I can see out a porthole as well. Someone is working on the postal clerk. He's not breathing. I hear them trying to make him breathe. Death is all around us now. The ship is dead in the water. A jacket is lovingly placed over the postal clerk's face. He is dead. An officer comes in from outside. We can't go out there. They are shooting at anyone on deck and have shot up the life rafts. I hear the whirl of a helicopter. It passes by the porthole. Did I just see armed troops? Word is passed. "Prepare to repel boarders!"

I am saying the Lord's Prayer. I don't know why. It just seemed the natural thing to do. Over and over. I forget the words. I can't get past two lines in the prayer. I'm terrified. I look around to see bloodied faces of stark terror. And then, it is over. Silence except for the heavy breathing of sailors suffering from shock. I've heard that sound before on a Pan Am flight as we lifted off from JFK one night for San Juan, Puerto Rico. The

engines are slowed down as we fly silently as if in a glider past the towering buildings in NYC and head for open water. Something about residents around the airport complaining of the noise aircraft are making as they claw their way into the sky above. And then the engines roar to life again and we soar into the night sky.

The attack is over. The ship's engine comes to life. Mr. Golden and his crew have worked miracles. We are heading further out to open water. Word is passed that we should move back to the mess decks. Walking, crawling, battle-weary and shocked CTs move along the passageway. The mess deck is filled with wounded. Our doctor is busy. Very busy. I see Lt. O'Connor lying on his stomach. He is severely wounded. A young man is wandering among the tables yelling for his brother. "I can't find my brother! Where is he?" He is in shock. Many wait for morphine. The well come to set by the wounded. Tables once filled with food consumed by laughing and happy shipmates now are covered with bodies, leaking vital fluids onto the deck. It is a bizarre scene. Yesterday we sat here and watched a movie on the mess decks. Now..... we watch shipmates die. We are not trained for this. I ask someone to help me into the first class mess. I look over at someone on the table. Someone is there, trying to push what looks like intestines, back into the wounded shipmate. I'm going to be sick. I'm deposited onto the sofa. I hear the GQ alarm go off. "Is there no end to this?" I say. "Did they come back to sink us?" Then silence. Again.... silence. I finally lose it, and attempt to force back tears. Red. Where is my friend? He was in the compartment across the hall when I was evacuated from Ops. Where is the section? Someone comes into the room. "Have you seen Red Addington?" I ask. He shakes his head no. I'm thinking what I'm going to do if he is dead. He and his family and ours are close. I'll need to see his wife and children. I'm not prepared for this.

Meanwhile, bulkheads are being shored up. The smoking lamp is out! There is fuel and oil everywhere. Fires have been extinguished but the threat of explosions is very real. The cook has managed to get sandwiches out. From somewhere, bottles of whiskey, rum, and everything else appear.

I fall asleep. Someone comes into the room. I open my eyes. Red? Is that you? Red? He stumbles over to where I am, and falls into a chair. He is soaked with fuel oil and seawater. He is bleeding. We just look at each other. Not saying a word. The next thing I remember is someone shaking me and asking if I'm all right. I reply "yes." Red tells me about his experience of being in the compartment across the hall from where the torpedo hit and of sea water flooding everything. He is in shock. Morning has arrived. I ask someone to help me on deck because help has arrived. The destroyers USS Massey and USS Davis are pulling along side. I get to the deck and look up to where I was standing at the time of the attack. We have over 800 holes in the ship. There have been fires. We had been attacked with napalm as well as armor piercing rockets. How did I ever get DOWN from there, I am thinking!

The destroyer pulls up to the starboard side, and ties up to us. Help arrives in the form of damage control, medical, and food. I'm setting on the deck watching all of this. Suddenly, the ship's horn sounds. The ropes are cut, and the destroyer hauls butt out of

there. The planes are back! I climb under something close by. Everyone scatters! Then.....silence. Nothing happens. The all clear sounds. The destroyer returns. Help again is coming aboard. I'm looked at by a medic. I tell him I'm not seriously wounded. Someone gives me a sandwich. I'm leaning against a bulkhead covered with something slimy. Brains? Body parts? I throw up. I'm not ready for food.

Later in the day, we are told that all wounded will leave the ship. I need to get something from my bunk. Someone helps me to it. I pull off the pillow cover, and shove in my shaving kit, wallet, underwear, and pictures of my family. Out on the deck, I wait in line to be lifted off the ship. I thought I was going to be carried over to the destroyer, but it is not there any longer. What I see is the USS America aircraft carrier, off in the distance, and above us a helicopter. I'm going to be lifted up INTO it as it hovers above the ship. And me, with a fear of heights! My god, will this nightmare ever end? They help me to the forward part of the ship. The harness is put around me. I'm told not to unfold my arms. I can see why! I'd slide right through the harness and fall to the deck, or the sea. I obey the instructions. As I am lifted off the deck, I look at the helicopter hovering above me. I won't look down. Someone at the door of the copter is guiding me in. Years later we will meet again via e-mail and talk about that moment. He hauls on my shot up leg and I yell out in pain. I'm inside. The harness is off. "Go to the rear!" he yells to me. I crawl to the rear of the helo and there is Red. Someone else is brought into the hovering helo, and then we are off! I look down at the ship, horrified at what I see. The noise from the helo props are loud. And then, we are settling down onto the flight deck of the aircraft carrier. Someone helps us out of the helo and onto one of the carrier elevators. I'm lying on the deck with other wounded, surrounded by able hands. The helo leaves to return to the Liberty for more wounded. The sudden jolt of the descending elevator startles us. It's fairly obvious that we are still in shock. We are level with the hangar bay. Two American crewmen grab my arm and carry me into the melee of sailors waiting to see the wounded. Flashbulbs go off. We cringe from the blinding lights. There are television cameras there. Down the passageways and into sickbay. Someone looks at each of us. Medical and Dental staff have been called into action. They treat us with TLC and begin administering first aid. We are safe.

When things quiet down, we begin to talk amongst ourselves. Who attacked us? Why did they attack us? Who is alive? What is happening? I hear someone say, "It was Israeli aircraft that hit us and Israeli torpedo boats that fired the torpedoes." We are able to send Red Cross telegrams. We quickly write letters. I detail in my letter who I know is alive and for Merlene to call their families to let them know. I'm thinking then. What are our families going through? Do they know what happened? Do they know we are alive? Mr. Lewis is temporarily blinded. He will recover. My friend who stood by Comm spaces on the Liberty and watched as I was being lifted up the ladder to the mess decks gave me a thumbs up sign. I responded. Our last signal together. He was killed in the torpedo explosion. Where was Smithy? Where was Frank? Where was Ronnie? Warren. Did me make it out? The names were flowing from our lips. We had our pictures taken together in front of the Rock of Gibraltar only days ago. Now, some of them will be with us no more.

Months later, while at my next command in Sabana Seca, Puerto Rico, and upon learning that the USS Belmont was in port, I asked Red to go with me to see the ship. I was suffering from PTSS, and didn't know it. Neither did any of the doctors at the Army Hospital to which I retreated often for help. Red and I got aboard the ship in the early evening. CTs met us, and gave us the tour. It looked so much like the Liberty, and panic was settling in quickly as we walked down inside the ship. I could still hear the shells hitting the deck and boring through the bulkheads. The muffled explosion of the torpedo. The dead covered by sheets on the tables. The Seaman yelling for his brother. I couldn't handle it. I told Red, "I've got to get out of here!" It would be months later when PTSS enveloped me to the point I needed to ask for help.

I was flown to Chelsea Naval Hospital, outside of Boston for treatment. A psychiatrist, Dr. Brigham, recognized the problem right away, and with him, I managed to crawl out of that deep dark hole of despair and into the sunlight of wellness again. Retuning back to my command, and my family, I resumed my duties fully.

Although PTSS hung around for years afterwards, I found speaking about the event at organized events like Rotary, Kiwanis, Civic Clubs and Navy Reserve Centers to be just the thing to cope with the problem. Even though PTSS surfaced now and then, I didn't cringe any longer when planes flew overhead, or loud sounds filled the air.

I'd like to meet the recruiter who told me that CTs don't go aboard ships. I have a tale to tell. A real mid-watch scorcher of a tale. And the Purple Heart to prove it.