

Whose war is this.

In 1948 with the partition of Palestine obtaining munitions, weapons, money and manpower was critical to the survival of the new State of Israel. Stalin in strenuous opposition to not only its survival but even the existence and lives of its citizens were the British Army and the combine Arab forces in the Middle East. On the day the UN announced the Partition of Palestine the Arabs and Jews attacked each other. The Arabs suffered initially a humiliating defeat despite well trained and equipped forces such as the Kingdom of Jordan's British equipped and led Arab Legion. Besieged by the Arab forces the new State of Israel was arms embargoed to defend their new state by the western Powers and blockaded by the British Royal Navy.

The Truman Administration and President were questionably neutral and definitely not in support of the new State of Israel. Classified reports by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the President indicated the US owned and operated nonscheduled airlines were actively engaged in running and violating the Royal Navy's blockade of Palestine. The "rogue" airline's, as they were described, were supplying the Israeli forces with aircraft, munitions, weapons and food supplies. While American Jews provided support, money and in many cases weapons and munitions, the principal supplier was a political entity friendly to the Israeli cause. The backer being the Soviet Union seeking to create political mischief and problems for its main adversaries, the United States and Britain.

At the time (1948) in history there were a considerable excess war surplus stores of cannons, aircraft, ships, munitions and all the essential materials to wage war. Most of these materials were available and acquireable in civilian markets all over the world. Large stores had been dumped or left in China, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, the Pacific Islands and Japan. In the Soviet occupied Romania Peoples Republic, their German designed, ME-109-E fighter aircraft continued to roll off production lines which were under control of the Russians. Russia became a major supplier of weaponry and munitions to the new Jewish State.

Enter an enterprising US non-soldier with an equally enterprising and quite resolute flight crew with prior military combat experience. Enter Gen. Curtiss LeMay, Chief of Staff, US Air Force – Europe. Advised by Washington of the activities of the rogue (US non-soldier Airlines) who were engaging in blockade running to Palestine, Gen LeMay issued orders to his field commanders to have their fighters patrol, intercept and "shoot down" the rogue airliners running the blockade. Despite several hundreds of air patrols using P-51 fighters and the accumulation of thousands of flight hours the US Army Air Forces saturation patrols of the Eastern Mediterranean found nothing to intercept or shoot at.

Meanwhile in Romania aircraft manufacturing technicians were dismantling the ME-109 fighters, cannons and machine guns for stowage aboard Douglas C-54 transports for Israel. The flights were bound for Lod Airport on the Palestinian Coast where they arrived after dark, were unloaded, the aircraft refueled and returned to Romania. Meanwhile the of the

Israeli government in the US were offering commissions in the Israeli Air Force to any Americans that acquired and few perhaps a B-17 or B-24 to Palestine for use with the Israeli Air Force. The IAF quickly acquired a hodge podge of ME-109's, British Spitfires, US made P-51's and a few P-38 fighters.

With forewarned knowledge that British and US military forces were closing in on the clandestine airlift of US operated C-54's, the Israeli's decided to minimize the risk to their line of supply. They seized some of the transports, shipping their flight crews to Rome. They ignored the many owners query's with denials of what was taking place. The expatriate crews and owners were left to their own devices to make it back to the US on limited funds and with flagged passports.

Most returned to the US via Canada and merely walked across the border. US Marshals sought them out when they had tips but the success rate was minimal and cooperation was nil. Meanwhile the Israeli's continued to operate and fly the contraband flights to build up their defense forces. During the course of these activities one of the C-54's operated by the IAF landed, out of gas, in the sea surf just off the end of the runway at LOD. The owner(s) meanwhile had been in phone negotiations with the IAF over the seizure aircraft and now they had a wrecked aircraft sitting in the surf in salt water on the coast of Palestine. It was of course unpainted. The Israeli's agreed they would pay for the loss of the aircraft as well as loss of revenue. It took several months before this became an accomplished fact, but they did in fact pay in full for the aircraft and loss of revenue plus a nice bonus.

The C-54 down in the surf at LOD was rescued and pulled ashore at LOD where the damage was repaired and the aircraft was decontaminated of salt water and shortly returned to service. It was subsequently sent to Burbank, California to the Flying Tiger Line's maintenance shops where it was overhauled and modified for convertible passenger service. The willingness and spirit of former combat pilots to turn their talents to helping the new state did not go unrewarded. We all know the story of Israel and their continual battle for survival situated within a circle of hostile forces. General George Armstrong Custer would sympathize with them without question. President Harry Truman changed his mind and his administrations about supporting the new State of Israel.

Today the Israeli's vast stock of advanced technology has been amply supplied our US military forces in the form of new weaponry, intelligence and electronic counter measures. Their technology is in use by most of our major aerospace corporations. Their pioneering of UAV technology has saved US lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and has advanced our technical base. In 1981 the Israeli Air Force went into Iraq to bomb and destroyed Iraq's facilities and its ability to manufacture nuclear weapons. They did so with minimal loss to their Air Force. Tomorrow they there may be Iran on their target list.