

# L'esplosione nucleare che rende illegali gli aiuti statunitensi a Israele

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Il reattore nucleare israeliano di Dimona.  
(Immagini Getty)

I ricercatori sono rimasti sorpresi quando hanno alzato lo sguardo e hanno visto il cielo nero come il carbone trasformarsi improvvisamente in un'aurora brillante e multicolore. Come geofisici dell'Earthquake Research Institute di Tokyo, stavano svernando in una stazione di ghiaccio isolata vicino alla Terra della Regina Maud in Antartide, un luogo dove la temperatura è scesa fino a meno 50 gradi Fahrenheit. Più o meno nello stesso momento, a metà terra di distanza, a Porto Rico, il gigantesco radiotelescopio di Arecibo da 1.000 piedi rilevò un disturbo insolito. Una strana e potente increspatura elettromagnetica è apparsa sulla superficie inferiore della ionosfera. E 1.200 miglia a nord, sulla costa atlantica della Florida, in un laboratorio segreto del governo degli Stati Uniti, stili lunghi e sottili come le zampe di un ragno iniziarono a oscillare avanti e indietro tracciando due immagini a forma di gobba su un foglio di carta millimetrata.

L'azione del computer è stata innescata da un segnale proveniente da un satellite nella gelida oscurità dello spazio profondo, a 67.000 miglia sopra la Terra . A forma di gigantesco ornamento per albero di Natale a 26 lati e sospeso senza peso nel vuoto, VELA 6911 faceva parte di una serie di satelliti progettati per fungere da sentinelle americane nello spazio, alla ricerca di segni di detonazioni nucleari su qualsiasi parte del pianeta. E la mattina presto del 22 settembre 1979 , alle 00:52:43 UTC, i sensibili strumenti di VELA 6911 registrarono quello che sembrava essere un lampo molto luminoso, seguito rapidamente da un secondo. Erano i classici indicatori di una potente esplosione nucleare. Da qualche parte laggiù, il più vicino possibile alla terra incognita, un paese canaglia aveva fatto esplodere una bomba nucleare. Un paese canaglia che sperava di non farsi prendere. È stata la prima e unica volta nella storia in cui si è verificata un'esplosione nucleare clandestina. E sulla base della loro analisi, le agenzie di intelligence statunitensi hanno concluso che il paese canaglia era Israele.

Now, 45 years later, that explosion could play a significant role in bringing an end to Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza by using American lawfare to halt Israeli warfare—finally enforcing US laws that would cut off all aid, including the billions and billions of dollars and the tons and tons of weapons Israel now receives. For decades, these laws, enacted by Congress to halt harmful and destructive actions by rogue actors, have been deliberately ignored with regard to Israel. Clearly, they must now be enforced.

Just this week, Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, issued a report titled, "Anatomy of a Genocide." It declared that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza has been met." A few days earlier, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had warned that "any transfer of weapons or ammunition to Israel" could violate international humanitarian law. This week, a Gallup poll indicated that most Americans disapprove of Israel's war in Gaza as well as of sending them military aid to fight it.

Hours after the sky lit up from the blast, confirmation that it was a nuclear explosion came from another US government facility, this one on remote Ascension Island. A bleak and rugged volcanic speck in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean, it lies near the equator between Africa and South America and is one of the most secret places on the planet. No one is allowed on the island without the approval of the US and British governments. In addition to a massive British eavesdropping base that targets countries on both continents, the island is also home to an American facility that monitors all undersea activity throughout the Atlantic. And because, at a certain depth, hydroacoustic signals travel through the water at about 5,000 feet per second, the sound of the massive blast was detected about 110 minutes after it took place.

In the netherworld of US intelligence, the rogue atomic explosion was shocking. The Jimmy Carter White House was quickly notified, and, following a series of highly classified meetings, spy agencies became unanimous in their view. "The Intelligence Community has high

confidence, after intense technical scrutiny of satellite data, that a low yield atmospheric nuclear explosion occurred in the early morning hours of September 22,” said a Secret/Sensitive Department of State document.

Attention, as a result, turned immediately to Israel. Its nuclear facility in the desert at Dimona had long since ceased to be a secret, and the question wasn't whether Israel could construct a nuclear weapon but how many it had already built. However, while constructing them secretly inside a building is one thing, secretly testing them out in the open without getting caught is much more difficult. Addressing the issue of “A Secret Test by Israel,” another CIA document outlined a number of reasons the state might have wanted to carry out a hidden nuclear test. Among them was “developing the fission trigger [an atom bomb] for a thermonuclear weapon [an hydrogen bomb]... A low-yield nuclear test conducted clandestinely at sea could have enabled them to make basic measurements of the device's performance.”

The report concluded, “Indeed, of all the countries which might have been responsible for the 22 September event, Israel would probably have been the only one for which a clandestine approach would have been virtually its only option.” And President Carter noted in his White House diary at the time, “We have a growing belief among our scientists that the Israelis did indeed conduct a nuclear test explosion in the ocean near the southern end of Africa.”

The VELA satellite system was designed in particular to watch for rogue tests by nuclear pariah states like Israel, one of the very few countries that had refused to sign both the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the 1975 Biological Weapons Convention, in spite of the fact that it had an illegal hidden arsenal of nuclear weapons and a secret biological weapons program. The problem for Israel—and a key reason for the secrecy involving the tests—was the Glenn Amendment to the US Arms Export Control Act. Passed by Congress in 1977, the amendment aimed particularly at the nuclear pariah states. It mandated an end to arms assistance, and an automatic application of extensive US sanctions, if the president determined that any state (other than the nuclear states authorized by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) detonated a nuclear explosive after 1977. The nuclear test was also a clear violation of the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty, to which Israel was a party.

Under US law, Israel *must* be banned from receiving its annual package of billions of dollars and arsenal of bombs. In a 2016 *Haaretz* column, Victor Gilinsky, a physicist and former commissioner of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, laid out the penalties: “The sanctions for detonating a nuclear explosion are tough: termination of assistance under the Foreign Assistance Act, termination of sales of defense equipment and military financing, prohibition of loans from US banks, and more. In other words, if the U.S. government were to conclude Israel detonated a nuclear explosion after 1977, the law, unless waived, would effectively end all US aid to Israel.” Newell Highsmith, who spent three decades with the State Department and was responsible for legal issues related to nonproliferation, agrees. “Glenn Amendment sanctions for detonation or receipt of a nuclear explosive device have

been viewed as a ‘death sentence’ because of the breadth of sanctions and because there is no presidential waiver,” he wrote last year for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

In addition to the violation of the Glenn Amendment, Israel is also in violation of the Symington Amendment, which has similar penalties for any country that delivers nuclear materials and technology to another country. Israel had a long history of friendship and cooperation with apartheid South Africa, and in addition to supplying millions of dollars worth of weapons to help violently suppress the country’s Black majority population, it also provided nuclear weapons materials and offered to sell the racist regime nuclear warheads to keep it in power. In return, Israel received uranium from South Africa to develop its weapons.

For decades, US presidents and members of Congress have willfully turned a blind eye to Israel’s extensive violations of American laws. Earlier this month, Maryland Democratic Senator Chris Van Hollen and seven other senators, including Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Jeff Merkley of Oregon, sent a strong letter to President Joe Biden. It urged him to enforce section 6201 of the Foreign Assistance Act by requiring Israel to stop restricting humanitarian aid access to Gaza or forfeit military aid from the US. The law prohibits the sale and transfer of military weapons to any nation that restricts the delivery of US aid, precisely what Israel is doing in its deliberate war of starvation against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. “We need the president and the Biden administration to push harder and to use all the levers of US policy to ensure people don’t die of starvation,” Van Hollen told *The Guardian*.

At the same time that US administrations were failing to enforce the ban on nuclear weapons testing by Israel, they also deliberately engaged in a campaign of censorship, lies, and disinformation to hide the truth from the American public. The Clinton White House even promulgated a regulation that threatens past and present government employees with harsh actions, including firing, if they publicly acknowledge that Israel has nuclear weapons. “All US government employees are forced to pretend they know nothing about Israeli nuclear weapons,” former NRC commissioner Gilinsky wrote in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. “Since everyone knows it’s not true, the pretense hobbles America’s policy on restraining the spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.”

Because of this official gag order, Americans are deliberately kept in the dark regarding the dangerousness of Israel’s illegal stockpile of nuclear weapons—weapons that have never been subject to international inspection and are therefore of questionable safety. And then there is the problem of that secret cache of nuclear weapons being controlled by a number of top Israeli officials whose extreme positions would sanction their use. Last November, Israeli Minister Amichai Eliyahu said one of Israel’s options in the war is to drop a nuclear bomb on Gaza. “That’s one way,” he said. Another Israeli official, Revital “Tally” Gotliv, urged her government to use “everything in its arsenal,” including “doomsday” weapons, against

Hamas. “Who would have imagined that, just as we have been worrying about Pakistani weapons falling into the hands of Islamic fanatics, we would come to the point where we have to fear Israel’s nuclear weapons falling into the hands of Israeli fanatics?” said Gilinsky.

With hundreds of drone attacks in the region and missiles flying back and forth, there is also the danger of one of them deliberately or accidentally hitting Israel’s Dimona nuclear weapons plant and setting off a nuclear catastrophe. Last October, according to Israeli reports, “Incoming rocket sirens are sounding in the Southern Negev region, close to the southern city of Dimona.” Adding to the danger is more than half a century’s worth of volatile nuclear waste, numbering hundreds of tons, in shallow trenches at the nuclear weapons complex—material that, unless carefully disposed of, could turn Dimona into another Chernobyl.

Americans are being deliberately lied to by their own government as to Israel’s vast and deadly nuclear stockpile, largely built with nuclear materials stolen from the United States. For those on Capitol Hill and in the White House, the incentive for keeping Israel’s secret—and thus allowing it to avoid US laws—is money and power. Millions in campaign donations from wealthy pro-Israel supporters and PACs, and power from lobbies like AIPAC. In 1979, rather than take any actions against Israel, President Carter, like those in the White House before and after him, did nothing. Carter has acknowledged this in years since, writing that the “reluctance to criticize any policies of the Israeli government is because of the extraordinary lobbying efforts” of AIPAC.

The strength of AIPAC is something CNN’s Wolf Blitzer knows a great deal about. Before his gig with cable news, he was a top propagandist for AIPAC. There is, he noted, “a widely held attitude among Israeli officials that Israel can get away with the most outrageous things. There is a notion among many Israelis that their American counterparts are not too bright, that they can be ‘handled.’”

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders apparently agrees, having repeatedly warned that Israel is violating both international and US laws. “To pretend that Israel is not violating international law or interfering with US humanitarian aid is absurd on its face,” he said this week. “The State Department’s position makes a mockery of US law and assurances provided to Congress.” Nevertheless, he concluded that “relatively few Democrats are prepared to pull the trigger and say, ‘You know what, hey, Mr. Netanyahu. You continue that and you’re not getting another nickel in American aid.’ Why’s that so? I guess it has a lot to do with AIPAC.”

Sanders ha poi puntato il dito contro la Casa Bianca. "Ed ha molto a che fare con il presidente", ha detto. In effetti, Joe Biden, durante la sua permanenza al Senato, è stato il destinatario numero uno al Congresso di milioni filo-israeliani, il che a quanto pare lo ha messo in cima alla lista israeliana dei "politici americani non troppo brillanti" che possono essere "maneggiato" con sacchi di contanti. Mentre era vicepresidente nel 2011, Biden ha tenuto un discorso a un gruppo di raccoglitori di fondi e sostenitori della scuola Yeshiva Beth Yehuda di Detroit. "Ho raccolto più soldi dall'AIPAC di alcuni di voi", ha detto tra gli applausi. "Pensate che sto scherzando, non è vero?" aggiunse. "Non sono."

Per la Casa Bianca e il Congresso, è tempo di togliere il bavaglio, smettere di essere "gestiti", rifiutare il denaro e far rispettare la legge con Israele, compresi gli emendamenti Glenn e Symington. Se i suoi leader vogliono far esplodere segretamente armi nucleari, vendere materiali nucleari a paesi razzisti, violare trattati, commettere crimini di guerra e impegnarsi in un genocidio etnico, i miliardi, le bombe e il sostegno dell'America non dovrebbero renderlo possibile.