

**OFFICIALS ABSOLVED FOR MAALOT DEATHS**

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- The report of the three-member Horev Committee on the Maalot massacre has absolved army, police and school authorities of blame for the deaths of 21 Israeli high school students, three members of the Cohen family and a soldier at the hands of Arab terrorists.

The committee headed by Gen. (Ret.) Amos Horev, president of the Haifa Technion, found that the Cabinet in Jerusalem was not in possession of all the facts when it was called on to make fateful decisions during the 12-hour ordeal.

But the report concluded that the decision to storm the building in attempt to save the lives of the young hostages was the only decision that could have been made under the circumstances.

The report's only serious criticism was of the teachers and guides who escaped from the Maalot school building when the armed terrorists burst in, leaving their charges to their fate. The Education Ministry announced it would decide whether to bring those involved before a disciplinary court.

The report noted that

the terrorists had come upon the sleeping high school students by chance while looking for a vehicle to steal. It found that security at Maalot was poor and the town was "open" to infiltration. It found that

the army was alerted to the terrorists but could not seal off the Lebanese border and that the police lacked manpower and were not sufficiently reinforced by the local civil guard.

The Horev Committee said that former Defense Minister Moshe

Dayan who was feeding information to Jerusalem from Maalot and Chief of Staff Gen. Mordechai Gur never

saw the letter from the terrorists spelling out their conditions for the release of the hostages. Both acknowledged

they knew of the letter but considered it irrelevant because it had been prepared in Beirut.

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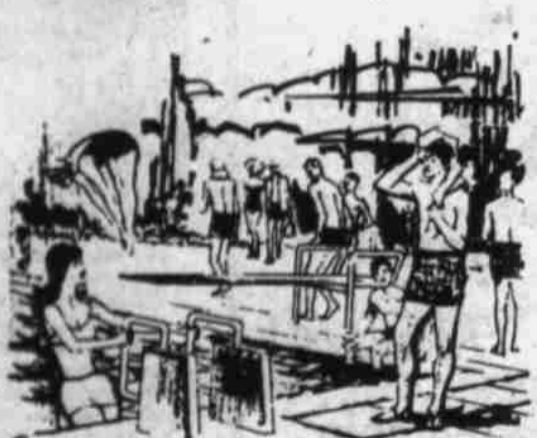
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