



MURDERERS STRIKE IN TEL AVIV ON EVE OF KISSINGER'S VISIT TERRORIST ASSAULT LEAVES 15 DEAD, INCLUDING 7 TERRORISTS, AND 23 WOUNDED GOVERNMENT SAYS A TROCITY WON'T DETER ISRAEL FROM 'DEFENDING ITS CITIZENS AND MAKING A POLITICAL EFFORT TO PROGRESS TO PEACE'

By David Landau (Jerusalem) and Yitzhak Shargil (Tel Aviv)

March 6 (JTA)--The government declared today that Israel will not be deterred or diverted from its dual purpose of "defending its citizens and making a political effort to progress toward peace." That statement was issued following a three-hour Cabinet meeting in the aftermath of last night's terrorist assault on the Tel Aviv beachfront which left at least 15 dead, including seven terrorists, and at least 23 wounded. Most of the fatalities occurred before dawn today when Israeli troops stormed the small Savoy Hotel adjacent to the beach which the terrorists had seized hours before and taken hostages.

Apart from the seven terrorists, three Israeli soldiers are known to be dead. The other victims included Israeli civilians and foreign tourists staying at the hotel but official sources so far have not released their names or other identification.

What Premier Yitzhak Rabin denounced today as a "murderous atrocity" was viewed by the Cabinet as a deliberate terrorist attempt to sabotage the next round of peace negotiations which U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger will undertake when he returns to the Middle East tomorrow. The Cabinet, meeting in secret as a ministerial security committee, said the assault was timed "for a political purpose--to foil any chance of progress toward a political settlement through negotiation."

(Credit for the attack was claimed in Beirut today by El Fatah, the largest terrorist group within the Palestine Liberation Organization.)

Will Fight Terrorists Wherever They Are

"The criminal act of these Fatah men in Tel Aviv underlines again the murderous aims and methods of the terror organizations and increases the vital need to continue the struggle against the terrorist organization wherever our hand can reach them," the Cabinet statement said.

"The Israel Defense Forces and the security services will continue to act to achieve the destruction of terrorists who infiltrate into Israel in order to carry out acts of sabotage and carnage," the statement added. Observers took those words to imply that vigorous Israeli retaliation against terrorist strongholds will occur very shortly.

Last night's attack on Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city, was carried out by eight terrorists who landed on the darkened beach from two rubber dinghys at about 11:30 p.m. local time. They crept up the 50 yards of sand undetected and, on reaching the Esplanade, a waterfront promenade lined with shops, nightclubs, restaurants and hotels, opened fire indiscriminately with automatic weapons, hurled hand grenades and, according to some accounts, fired bazooka shells.

Most of the wounded are believed to have

been hit during the initial foray as pedestrians scattered for cover and motorists, whose cars were hit by bullets, abandoned them to seek shelter.

Police who rushed to the scene at the first sound of gunfire engaged the terrorists. The latter raced, shooting, along Geula Street, a narrow thoroughfare that ends at the beach. Failing to break through the heavy glass doors of a local movie house, the Cinema One, they crossed the street and broke into the Savoy Hotel, one of a number of small, shabby hostels just off the beach.

Demand Release Of Jailed Arabs

They seized hostages among hotel employees and guests. The number of hostages was variously estimated at between 10-40. The terrorists continued firing from the top floor of the four-story building as hundreds of crack army troops surrounded the street and cordoned off the neighborhood. Ambulances raced to the scene from all parts of the city to carry off the wounded. Defense Minister Shimon Peres arrived at the scene shortly after midnight.

The terrorists reportedly demanded the release of 10 jailed Arabs and Greek Catholic Archbishop Hillarion Capucci, serving a 12-year prison term for smuggling arms to terrorists in Israel. They also reportedly set a ten-hour deadline for Israeli authorities to provide them with a plane to fly themselves, the released prisoners and hostages to an Arab country.

Israeli officials ignored the demands and shortly before dawn a commando unit was ordered to storm the Savoy Hotel. In the fierce battle that ensued, six terrorists and three soldiers were killed. Peres announced after the shooting subsided that all of the terrorists had been killed. Hours later, however, more shots were fired from the hotel. Israeli troops found two more terrorists hiding out, killed one and captured the other.

The initial figure of 15 dead, including the terrorists, was not final. More bodies are believed to be buried in the debris of the hotel, but boobytraps planted by the terrorists delayed the search for bodies. The hotel was described this morning as "virtually in ruins. Its narrow lobby and corridors were piled with crumbled masonry, shattered glass, smashed furniture, scattered shoes and articles of clothing belonging to guests. A few of the fluorescent lights in the lobby still flickered, casting a deadly blueish light over the carnage.

Well Armed Killers

Last night's attack was not the first terrorist act against Tel Aviv but was easily the most audacious. Last Dec. 11, a lone terrorist lobbed hand grenades from the balcony of the Chen Cinema on Dizengoff Circle in the heart of Tel Aviv, killing two patrons and later himself when a gren-

(Continued Page 4, Col. 1)

importance of making progress towards peace." He said "I hope we can continue." He is due to arrive in Aswan tomorrow for talks with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on a second-stage Israeli Sinai withdrawal.

President Ford said "outrages of this nature can only damage the cause in whose name they are perpetrated." He extended his "deep sympathy" and that of the American people to the families of those slain in the attack.

The State Department, in a statement to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, said "We deeply regret the loss of innocent life in this incident and extend profound sympathy to all those affected. We deplore all recourse to violence, which is entirely contrary to all civilized norms and to the search for a peace which will be just and lasting for all the peoples of the area." (By Joseph Polakoff)

KATZIR CONDEMNS 'CRIMINAL ACT'

NEW YORK, March 6 (JTA)--President Ephraim Katzir of Israel, who is visiting New York, today called the terrorist attack "a criminal act" which reveals "the barbaric nature of the Arab terrorist organizations." He said the act "is another reminder to the world of the true nature of the so-called PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) and their ultimate goals." Katzir added:

"The people of Israel will continue to do everything in their power to attain peace by negotiations and political means. I want to assure you that terrorism will only strengthen our determination to protect human life from acts of barbarism against innocent civilians." Katzir, in the statement released by the Israel Consul General in New York, said he wanted "to send my sincere condolences to the families who lost their dear ones in this brutal terrorist attack. I also want to express my wishes of a speedy recovery to the wounded."

FOUR DEAD IDENTIFIED

TEL AVIV, March 6 (JTA)--The three Israeli soldiers killed storming the Savoy Hotel before dawn were identified in an army communique released late this afternoon. They are Sgt. Itamar Ben David, 19, of Kfar Yehezkel; Pvt. Moshe Deutchman, 20, of Tel Aviv; and Col. Uzzi Ya'Yiri, 39, of Ramat Hasharon. Only one civilian fatality was immediately identified, Max Halperin, 63, of Tel Aviv. Eleven persons were wounded in the hotel, five of them soldiers, the army communique said.

The casualties apparently occurred when eight terrorists barricaded in the building, touched off explosive charges that demolished the two top floors. Col. Ya'Yiri, a veteran of the Yom Kippur War who fought on the Sinai front, left a wife and five children. He was not on duty at the time of the terrorist assault but volunteered for the unit ordered to storm the building. The sole surviving terrorist is under interrogation.

PERCY; ARAFAT MUST RESTRAIN TERROR

WASHINGTON, March 6 (JTA)--Sen. Charles H. Percy (R., Ill.) said today that PLO chieftain Yasir Arafat "must restrain the terrorists if he wishes to have credibility or respect." The Senator, who described Arafat as "relatively moderate" after a visit to the Middle East last month, said, in reply to a reporter today who asked what he thought of Arafat after last night's terrorist raid, that "regardless of any characterization of him, I condemn this senseless act

of terrorism."

Reporters noted that while Percy described the terrorist raid as "a calculated effort by extremists" to destroy the peace efforts of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, he did not identify the "extremists"--notwithstanding the fact that Arafat's PLO has claimed credit for the Tel Aviv attack.

Percy was not immediately available for an interpretation of the term "extremists" in the prepared statement he issued today. One of his aides told reporters, "We do not know if Arafat himself was responsible for the raid and gave the order."

Percy's statement, moreover, seemed to put the onus on Israel, at least in part, should Kissinger's peace efforts fail. The statement said: "The raid on Tel Aviv, coming just in advance of Secretary Kissinger's trip to the Middle East, seems to be a calculated effort by extremists to wreck the chances for peace by hardening Israeli resistance to agreement on the next step of withdrawal."

"I would hope that responsible Arab leadership would make it known to the instigators of this raid that such vicious attacks are an embarrassment to the Arab world and ill serves the cause of the Palestinians. I urge Prime Minister Rabin of Israel, President Sadat of Egypt, and President Assad of Syria to show their utter rejection of such tactics by redoubling their efforts for a new agreement. To do less, would be to allow the extremists to dictate policy for both sides."

JEWISH LEADERS EXPRESS OUTRAGE

NEW YORK, March 6 (JTA)--American Jewish leaders expressed horror and outrage today over last night's terrorist assault on Tel Aviv. All agreed that the attack was a calculated effort to thwart the latest peace moves about to be initiated in the Middle East by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and that it branded the Palestine Liberation Organization as nothing more than a gang of killers deserving not recognition but the opprobrium of the world. They also stated that the attack, once again proved that Yasir Arafat could not be described as "relatively moderate."

Statements to that effect were issued by Mrs. Faye Schenk, president of the American Zionist Federation; Rabbi Israel Miller, chairman, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Elmer Winter, president of the American Jewish Committee; Dr. Judah J. Shapiro, president of the Labor Zionist Alliance; Dr. Joseph P. Sternstein, president of the Zionist Organization of America; David M. Blumberg, B'nai B'rith president; Mrs. Charlotte Stein, president of Pioneer Women; and Herman Rosenbaum, president of the National Council of Young Israel.

Maynard I. Wishner, chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, the organization which earlier condemned Sen. Charles H. Percy for characterizing Arafat as "relatively moderate," declared that the attack "cannot be categorized as a senseless act of terror as the world has described so many previous massacres. It was a planned, carefully engineered act designed not only to terrorize the Israeli people but also to upset any peaceful talks resolving political problems."

FLASH: TEL AVIV (JTA)--Israeli naval units Thursday night captured a 150-ton sailing vessel believed to have been the "mother ship" that launched the terrorists who attacked Tel Aviv. The vessel, whose origin was not immediately identified, is believed to have dropped the terrorists about 30 miles off-shore.

THE TERROR ATTACK; EYEWITNESS REPORT By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, March 6 (JTA)--The staccato of automatic gunfire abruptly ended a quiet evening--this correspondent was spending with friends in their flat near the Tel Aviv beachfront last night. Our first thought was that it must be a gang war--Chicago style. The extortion racket flourishes in this once fashionable neighborhood now the locale of sleazy nightclubs and discotheques where rival gangs frequently "shoot it out."

But heavy explosions--grenades or bazooka shells--that rattled windows and shook showers of plaster from walls and ceilings told us immediately that these were gangsters of a different, deadlier sort. As we were to learn very quickly, we were near the front line of an El Fatah terrorist attack on Israel's largest city--something that heretofore has occurred only in outlying border villages like Kiryat Shemona and Maalot.

Less than 200 yards away, on Geula Street, near the beach, eight heavily armed terrorists who had landed in the dead of night from rubber boats were firing wildly in all directions and hurling grenades. Police were returning the fire. Of course, we didn't know the details immediately. We first heard the gunfire shortly after 11 p.m. My host tried to call the police but the lines were busy.

As bullets whistled past and sirens wailed, we, and other tenants of the building made our way to shelters. An official police communique broadcast by radio told us that terrorists were holed up in the Savoy Hotel on Geula Street, just around the corner.

Nightmarish Spectacle

When I went into the street, I saw a nightmarish spectacle. Red tracer bullets streaked through the night air. The four-story Savoy Hotel, illuminated by floodlights, was surrounded by troops, local police and border police in full battle regalia. Military vehicles, armored cars and personnel carriers clogged the surrounding streets. Red Mogen David ambulance crews were administering first aid to wounded civilians on the sidewalks and gutters. Looking out to sea, the blinding light of magnesium flares revealed naval patrol boats cruising just off the beach.

The entire neighborhood was cordoned off but hundreds of people pressed against police barriers to watch what was transpiring. Sara Najaj, 21, who was being treated for a bullet wound in the leg, had just been married in a small wedding hall next to the Savoy Hotel. The sound of gunfire sent her, her groom and guests into the streets.

She said that her husband, a reserve paratrooper raced off to join a police unit firing at the terrorists. "I screamed at him and ran after him. The next thing I knew I was struck by something. I fell and kept shouting," Mrs. Najaj said. "My husband was ahead of me. He saw me fall and came back. He picked me up and carried me to an ambulance. I haven't seen him since." She added: "This is a night I won't forget. At least it happened after we were married."

Other Voices, Other Words

Harold Adams, a Californian who said he was a veteran of the Vietnam war, said he was just emerging from the Cinema One movie house across the street from the Savoy when he saw terrorists firing weapons. "I saw two guerrillas

firing wildly with semi-automatic rifles." He also saw other terrorists throwing grenades from the hotel roof. "Luckily, no one I saw was hit, although there were people around the cinema and coming from a wedding party," Adams said.

Terrorist attacks all seem to follow a similar pattern. After the initial gun battles, the terrorists, if they survive, seize hostages and try to bargain for their lives. This went on at the Savoy Hotel during the wee hours of the morning. Kochava Levi, an Israeli woman taken hostage, was chosen by the terrorists to convey their demands to the authorities because she spoke Arabic.

From a top floor window of the hotel she called out: "Do you hear me? I am being held hostage with others. The terrorists demand that you bring over the French or Japanese Ambassadors. The French would do. They want you to prepare a UN plane to take them and 20 prisoners, including Msgr. Capucci and the hostages to Damascus. Otherwise, they threaten to blow us all up." She said the terrorists' deadline was 7 a.m.

Another female voice was heard, speaking in German: "My name is Maria Rot. I am from Switzerland. I am with my friend here. We are well." Shortly afterwards, Miss Levi returned to the window. She said that a tourist from Germany was seriously injured and the terrorists would allow him to be evacuated.

Stretcher-bearers approached the hotel. Eventually the injured German appeared, helped down stairs by Miss Levi. He was put into an ambulance and rushed to a hospital.

Rescue Workers Dig Frantically

At the first light of dawn, Israeli soldiers were ordered to storm the hotel. They approached silently and unobserved. As they reached the upper floors of the building the terrorists detonated a huge explosion. When the smoke cleared, the two upper floors of the hotel were demolished. Miss Levi escaped unhurt. But the other hostages and terrorists were believed dead. Rescue workers dug frantically through the ruins, finding nine dead bodies and about 23 wounded. But booby-traps continued to explode, hindering the rescue operations.

By mid-morning, police were still combing the ruins and searching adjacent buildings. Defense Minister Shimon Peres, who had been on the scene almost from the start, announced that all the terrorists were dead. But he was wrong.

At about noon, shots were fired from the ruined building. Mullah Cohen, the Civil Defense commander for Tel Aviv, spotted a terrorist trying to escape. He ran after the man who bit his hand as he tried to grab him. Police, however, quickly subdued the escapee who was rushed from the scene under heavy guard. He told police there were eight in his gang, all El Fatah members. As security forces returned to the hotel, more shots rang out and four persons were wounded. The eighth terrorist was found and killed on the spot.

FORD, KISSINGER DENOUNCE ATTACK

WASHINGTON, March 6 (JTA)--President Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger denounced today the Arab terrorist attack. The President called the attack one which "should be strongly deplored by everyone." Citing the "tragic loss of innocent lives," the President made his condemnation in a written statement read by White House press secretary Ron Nessen.

Kissinger, in a statement made in London and also released here, said he was "completely condemning" the attack, adding that "it underlines the

