

THREE ISRAELI SOLDIERS KILLED, 17 WOUNDED IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 4 (JTA) -- Three Israeli soldiers were killed and 17 wounded in heavy fighting Wednesday, in the battle for-Maidoun village in southern Lebanon. Between 40 and 50 guerrillas were reportedly killed.

Israeli radio and television reported Wednesday night that all Israel Defense Force soldiers had withdrawn to Israel, ending the two-day incursion into Lebanon.

Heavy fighting began at dawn between units of the IDF and its allied South Lebanon Army, and what Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin described as "hostile forces."

The battle centered around Maidoun, just south of Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. The resistance was reportedly mounted by guerrillas of Hezbollah, the pro-Iranian extremist Shiite militia and the mainstream Shiite militia, Amal.

The IDF-SLA forces, supported by artillery and missile-firing Cobra helicopter gunships, captured Maidoun after what was reported to be a short but fierce battle.

According to Lebanese sources and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, IDF gunners pounded the village with some 1,000 shells fired at the rate of 20 a minute.

The guerrillas fled to surrounding hilltops and fired at the attack helicopters.

According to Israel Radio, the decision to attack Maidoun stemmed from its importance as a guerrilla base and its position commanding an area that includes the Lebanese Christian town of Marjayoun, and Metulla and Kiryat Shmona in Upper Galilee.

Israel Radio's military correspondent said there were no civilians in Maidoun, which had been turned into a fortress by Hezbollah and a base for terrorist attacks on the IDF and infiltration into the southern Lebanon security zone.

Close To Syrian Troops

Reports from Lebanon said the fighting took place only about a mile from Mashghara, the Syrian army's forward positions in the Bekaa Valley. The Syrian army was put on full alert when the Israeli incursion began Monday, but has not intervened. The Syrians said they would not do so unless IDF forces advanced on them. Syria is reported to have more than 10,000 soldiers deployed there.

Lebanon radio said only a small Syrian force remained in Mashghara, the main body having pulled out when the IDF artillery went into action Wednesday morning.

Israel Radio said some IDF forces had completed their part of the operation and have begun to pull back into the security zone. There was no confirmation that a general IDF withdrawal had begun. Brig. Gen. Ephraim Lapid, an IDF spokesman, said Wednesday evening that the IDF would issue a communique when the operation is completed.

He said an interim communique was issued Tuesday night because the foreign media and Lebanese reports had exaggerated the size and scope of the operation. He referred to the NBC

news report Monday that 2,000 Israeli troops had entered Lebanon.

Defense Minister Rabin told the Knesset Wednesday that the IDF was engaged in "a routine operation as part of the policy of routine security measures in south Lebanon, the aim of which is to prevent terrorist infiltration, to prevent terrorists from basing themselves in the area, and to transmit a clear message to the local population that they should not cooperate with those circles which aid the terrorists against us, from any type of organization."

House-to-House Search

The first 24 hours of the IDF incursion was without serious incident. Israeli and SLA troops combed the rugged terrain north and northwest of the Galilee panhandle and on the western slopes of Mount Hermon. They conducted house-to-house searches in at least a dozen villages, looking for terrorist arms caches and possible hiding places in caves.

The terrorists apparently fled the region before the IDF arrived. But the IDF presence served as a warning to local villagers not to assist terrorists in any manner. Leaflets containing such warnings were widely distributed.

According to the IDF's announcement of the operation late Monday night, it was undertaken to destroy terrorist arms and bases used in recent attempts to infiltrate Israel.

While the operation was under way, Israel Air Force planes flew surveillance missions over Palestinian refugee camps in the Sidon and Tyre areas.

According to reports here Wednesday, the number of troops engaged in the operation is considerably less than reported in the foreign press. Military sources said the troops numbered in the hundreds with a dozen or so tanks in support.

Meanwhile, UNIFIL sources reported that six Katyusha rockets were fired Wednesday from north of the southern Lebanon security zone toward Marjayoun, the SLA headquarters. There were no casualties. But one rocket struck the headquarters of the Norwegian UNIFIL contingent, causing heavy damage.

NBC AGAIN UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR POSSIBLE CENSORSHIP VIOLATION

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 4 (JTA) -- Government officials are investigating charges that NBC News may have violated censorship rules when it broadcast a bulletin Monday afternoon of an Israel Defense Force incursion into southern Lebanon, the Jerusalem Post reported Wednesday.

NBC broke into its regular programing with the bulletin hours before the IDF officially announced the operation, shortly before midnight Monday, local time. The early report may have given terrorists in southern Lebanon advance warning, enabling them to escape, the Jerusalem Post said.

If the NBC correspondent filed the report without submitting it to the military censor, it would be the second such breach by the American network in the past two weeks. The Israel Gov-

ernment Press Office suspended the credentials of NBC correspondent Martin Fletcher on April 26.

Fletcher allegedly violated censorship rules with a report on the Israeli government's purported involvement in the assassination of Khalil al-Wazir, second in command of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who was gunned down at his home in Tunis on April 18.

Monday's NBC bulletin claimed that 2,000 Israeli troops had entered southern Lebanon and that their objective was unknown. No other American network broadcast a special bulletin and Israeli military sources said the NBC estimate of troops involved was wildly exaggerated.

The Jerusalem Post quoted "sources in southern Lebanon" Wednesday as describing the IDF operation as a "show of strength rather than a military mission aimed at specific targets."

"The sources noted that news of the operation had apparently been deliberately leaked to the foreign media -- in direct contravention of the usual practice during an IDF operation," the newspaper said.

ON THE SCENE IN GAZA: ANOTHER DAY OF 'RELATIVE CALM' By Gil Sedan

GAZA, May 4 (JTA) -- It was a clear day in Gaza. A blue sky. A cool breeze off the blue sea rustled fronds in the palm orchards. A virtual paradise to a visitor driving through.

"Everything is quiet," an Israel Defense Force senior officer said early Wednesday morning. "But there is a smell of tension in the air," he added.

It is the pungent smell of burning tires and of tear gas.

Driving from Gaza military headquarters down the main street, Omar el-Mukhtar, a reporter's car was pelted with stones. When this happens there is no making a U-turn. One must step on the accelerator and keep on driving, hoping the stones will hit the body of the car and miss the windows.

This time, luckily, they missed.

Around the corner from Falastin Square, the center of Gaza, soldiers forced passers-by to clean away the debris of burned tires that were an improvised roadblock only a few minutes before. The soldiers were visibly bored.

"This is an everyday scene," one of them said. The roadblock had been intended to cut the main traffic artery between the city and the southern Gaza Strip. But that hardly bothered anyone.

Hours passed and nothing special happened. At the end of the day the military would issue a statement saying "relative calm" prevailed in the Gaza Strip.

When they speak of "relative calm," the military spokespersons mean there were no major clashes between the soldiers and the local population resulting in casualties.

But calm is hardly the word to describe the situation in Gaza. The Palestinian uprising is far from ended.

Most shops in Gaza were closed. Many Arab workers stayed away from their jobs in Israel. The only business activity was in the downtown marketplace. Even there, the transactions were furtive and hasty, as if everything could be shut down in minutes.

At 2 in the afternoon, prayers of the Ramadan holiday were over. The Shati refugee camp,

on the shores of the Mediterranean, came to life.

At first, everything seemed normal. Traffic moved briskly along Nasser Street on the eastern perimeter of the camp.

Then a group of youngsters gathered at the street corner, each armed with a large stone, waiting for action. The youths piled bricks on the road to stop or slow down vehicles.

The first vehicle was a police van, which broke through the barrier, its occupants shooting into the air. Then came an army truck. The soldiers fired tear gas.

But the youths were not deterred. They faced the soldiers, provoking them, shouting insults in Hebrew. "Come on, you maniacs," though not typical, was one of the few printable taunts.

The soldiers were deliberately slow, almost lethargic in their reaction. They massed their forces and then, almost strolling, firing an occasional burst of tear gas, they backed the youths toward the camp entrance.

Well-Rehearsed Roles

The confrontation lasted about two hours. It was as if both sides were actors in a play, each performing a well-rehearsed role. It was hard to imagine that at any moment the situation could become one of life or death.

The soldiers forced the young Palestinians to march in front of them as they entered the refugee camp -- protection against the stones in the hands of the camp residents.

Quiet was restored at the camp by evening and the military would again come up with its favorite phrase -- "relative calm."

On this day, it meant that only two people were slightly injured in clashes with Israel Defense Force units in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip.

Eastward, in the West Bank, two residents of Silwad village, in the Judean hills, were slightly wounded. A girl was slightly wounded in Nablus. No one was killed.

It was a quiet day. And tomorrow, maybe there would be another.

RABIN WARNS ARABS TO END UPRISING By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 4 (JTA) -- Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin warned Palestinians from the Knesset podium Wednesday to end their uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, saying they "will achieve nothing through violence."

Rabin spoke in reply to no-confidence motions, introduced by the Hadash Communist Party and the Progressive List For Peace, protesting the Israel Defense Force's conduct in the territories.

Both motions were defeated overwhelmingly, as was a motion introduced by Abdel Wahab Darousha, sole member of the newly formed Arab Democratic List, protesting the IDF's incursion into southern Lebanon.

U.S. CRITICIZES CLOSING OF WEEKLY By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 4 (JTA) -- The State Department Wednesday criticized Israel for closing down the Palestinian weekly Al-Awda.

Israel defended its action Monday on the grounds that the East Jerusalem publication is guided and funded by terrorist organizations.

REAGAN TELLS WHITE HOUSE GROUP SOVIET JEWS 'CLOSE TO MY HEART'

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 4 (JTA) -- President Reagan told a White House seminar on religious rights in the Soviet Union Tuesday afternoon that "the rights of Soviet Jews have taken up much of our official time -- and this is very close to my heart."

With former refusenik Yosef Begun sitting on the dais along with representatives of other religious groups, Reagan said:

"The faith of the peoples of the Soviet Union is pure and unbreakable. As Moses led his people from bondage in Egypt, as the early Christians not only withstood pagan Rome, but converted an empire, we pray that the millennium of Christianity in Kiev will mean freedom for the faithful in Russia, in the Ukraine, the Baltic States, and all the regions of the Soviet Union."

"Today, roughly 90 million people in the Soviet Union, or nearly a third of the population, proclaim some form of belief in God," Reagan said. He said it was an "encouraging sign" that "some Soviet dissidents have been allowed to emigrate."

The president spoke three weeks before his summit in Moscow with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, scheduled May 29 to June 3.

What he hopes for ultimately, Reagan said, "is a willingness to see continued change, in the spirit of glasnost, when it comes to matters of religion. Perhaps the process is beginning."

VIETNAM MEMORIAL DEFACED;

JWV OFFERS \$1,000 REWARD

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 4 (JTA) -- The Jewish War Veterans is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandals who defaced the Vietnam War Memorial.

The memorial was defaced with scratches, including a swastika. The 493-foot granite wall contains the names of American servicemen who died in Vietnam.

The vandalism was discovered several weeks ago, but only became public knowledge Tuesday, according to Earle Kittleman, chief of public information for the National Park Service. He said it was the first time the monument had been defaced.

The wall, the most visited site in Washington since it opened in 1982, was erected through the efforts of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which also has offered a \$1,000 reward.

Jack Litz, the JWV's national commander, said he was "outraged by the desecration of a monument which honors the memory of those who died in war."

Litz said he was particularly concerned that a swastika was discovered among the deep scratches.

"This symbol of the evil Nazi regime, which so many Jewish war veterans fought against, has been reappearing in recent months on synagogues, on Jewish monuments and cemeteries," he said.

Because of these incidents, the JWV leader had decided to reactivate the organization's national reward fund, which existed several years ago to help find anti-Semitic vandals, according to Michelle Kelley, the JWV's communications director.

JEWISH AGENCY OFFICIAL URGES JEWS TO SUPPORT ISRAEL THROUGH TOURISM

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, May 4 (JTA) -- Mendel Kaplan, chairman of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors, urged American Jews this week to show their support for the State of Israel at this "difficult time" by visiting the country.

"Israel needs your presence as much as your money," Kaplan told American Jewish leaders attending a briefing session Tuesday for the upcoming Jewish Agency Assembly in Jerusalem.

Expressing concern over the decline in American Jewish tourism to Israel since the disturbances in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip began in December, Kaplan said that American Jews have not been showing their support and concern for Israel "in terms of being there."

"We need to show our support for Israel not only in monetary sense, but also by being involved and being there," he said. He complained that when American Jews are concerned about physical safety, they cancel their trips to Israel.

American Jews and Jews all over the world should come and visit Israel in "times of stress," as well as in time of joy, Kaplan asserted.

Israel's hotel industry is presently facing a crisis as a result of the decline in tourism, especially from the United States.

Kaplan, who was the keynote speaker at the Jewish Agency briefing, devoted his short address to the new challenges and plans for reshaping the agency and streamlining its operation.

'Involved In Constant Change'

"We are involved in constant change, re-evaluating and updating," the chairman said. He said the implications of these changes will be discussed by the delegates at the agency assembly, which is scheduled in June.

The proposed changes are in the fields of Jewish education, immigration and absorption, and development projects in Israel, Kaplan said. The changes include the following:

- A joint authority for the monitoring, coordination and evaluation of all Jewish education programs sponsored by the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization will be established "to avoid duplication."

- The Jewish Agency will turn over its absorption activities of new immigrants to the Israeli Ministry of Absorption. "The Jewish Agency will become part of the process that confronts bureaucracy" in helping the immigrants become integrated into Israeli society, Kaplan said.

- The Jewish Agency will move from rural settlements projects toward regional development, with strong emphasis on high-tech industries and computerization.

The new development approach, Kaplan said, will concentrate on developing whole regions, such as the Arava or Galilee, instead of single settlements.

Kaplan cited the town of Yeroham in southern Israel as an example of successful urban development in recent years. A town on the verge of disintegration, with high unemployment and dwindling population, Yeroham is now "the first computerized town in Israel and probably in the world," a technological center for the Arava and Negev region, he said.

The changes undertaken by the Jewish Agency, Kaplan said, are to "make it relevant to the Israel of tomorrow."

ISRAELIS, BUT FEW OTHER JEWS, TOOK PART IN U.S. AMNESTY PROGRAM

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, May 4 (JTA) -- An estimated 1,600 Israelis residing in the United States have applied for legal status under the historic government amnesty program that ended Wednesday.

According to immigration and resettlement experts at American Jewish organizations, the Israelis are the only group of Jews expected to take part in the program in significant numbers.

But despite official support of immigration reform and the amnesty program, Jewish organizations have shown no support for the Israeli participants.

Most Jewish agencies "have not elected to become part of providing legalization services, because they did not want to be in a position of legalizing Israeli undocumented aliens," said Gary Rubin, programming director of the American Jewish Committee. "They did not want a Jewish organizational presence in taking population away from the Israelis."

The government's amnesty program was open to all undocumented aliens who were able to prove that they had been in the United States continuously since Jan. 1, 1982.

Although the total number of those applying did not meet expectations for the program, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service was deluged with last-minute applications for amnesty.

One week before the deadline of the one-year program, INS officials announced that the government had received 1.3 million applications under the general legalization program and another 450,000 under a separate program for agricultural workers.

The overwhelming majority of applicants were Mexicans, although there were also large numbers of Asians, Poles and South and Central Americans adding to the mix.

Jewish Organization Support

Jewish organizations had been involved in the program from the beginning -- supporting the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, calling for a further liberalization of its statutes and joining with other ethnic groups in lobbying for an extension of the amnesty program.

In Texas, for example, the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston supported a bill that called on Congress not to deport Salvadoran or Nicaraguan refugees, until the general accounting office assessed whether or not they were subject to political oppression at home.

The CRC also worked closely with the Central American Refugee Center in Houston, according to CRC director Art Abramson, and a local YM-YWHA has helped refugees seek amnesty.

In Chicago, officials at the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) office chose to work locally with the Travellers and Immigrant Aid Society, as few Jews were approaching HIAS directly with inquiries about the amnesty program.

According to Sheldon Wyckell, director of HIAS in Chicago, the agency "wrestled locally with what to do if Israelis were to approach" and ask for assistance in seeking amnesty.

"We reached a decision to deal with these problems if they arose," said Wyckell. They didn't.

HIAS maintains an official hands-off policy toward Israeli residents. "It is longstanding board policy not to assist Israelis to leave Israel or

adjust their status in the U.S. It has to do with how we view the Jewish state," Karl Zukerman, HIAS executive vice president, said in New York.

Other organizations do not deal with Israeli immigration because of the nature of their programs. The New York Association of New Americans, for example, has a specific mandate to deal only with immigrants having refugee status.

Soviet Immigrants Unaffected

The amnesty program has not affected Soviet immigrants to any great degree. Jews coming out of the Soviet Union are eligible for refugee status, subject only to yearly quotas set by Congress. Until those quotas become more limiting, Soviet Jews have more to lose by entering the country illegally.

Because Jews are not being oppressed in Israel, explained Rubin of AJCommittee, Israelis need to meet the same immigration criteria of other immigrant groups. Rubin guessed that those applying represented a fraction of the Israelis actually living in the United States. Their numbers are notoriously hard to determine, and range from less than 200,000 to more than 300,000.

Rubin said that Israelis may not elect to take advantage of the program for many of the same reasons that other ethnic groups elect not to. Some refuse to trust the INS, despite its promise not to use the amnesty application to report illegal aliens. Or they may have concerns about families splitting up, whereby a husband or wife is accepted and the spouse is not.

But Israelis may have particular reasons as well, suggested Rubin. "In places like Rego Park (N.Y.) or Los Angeles, even undocumented Israelis fit in, are generally protected and realistically are not under great risk of being found out."

In addition, said Rubin, "the Israeli population in general considers itself more than others a temporary population. The first generation always thought it was going back home. They really believe that no matter how long they live here they are going back to Israel. If true, there is no reason for them to legalize."

And if they do, suggested Wyckell of HIAS in Chicago, there are a number of reasons why the Jewish community might be the last to find out. "I think it's a tribute to Jewish ingenuity. I think people are taking care of themselves."

ISRAEL READY TO COMPROMISE ON TABA

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 4 (JTA) -- Israel is ready and eager to settle its dispute with Egypt over Taba by compromise, before a five-member international arbitration panel issues its binding ruling, expected some time this month.

That was stated officially Wednesday following consultations on the matter between Premier Yitzhak Shamir, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

But the three government leaders have failed to agree on the nature of the compromise, and it is in fact doubtful that Egypt is interested in one at this late stage.

The U.S. State Department's legal adviser, Abraham Sofaer, has been shuttling between Jerusalem and Cairo for the past two weeks to promote a compromise agreement. Peres and Rabin are reportedly amenable to Sofaer's proposal that Egypt be given sovereignty over Taba while Israel would continue to operate two resorts it built there.