

**U.S. WILL HOLD IRAN RESPONSIBLE
IF ANYONE ACTS ON DEATH THREAT**

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 7 (JTA) -- The United States has warned Iran's leaders that they would be held responsible if anyone responds to a call from the speaker of the Iranian parliament to kill Americans.

"We will hold the Iranian leadership responsible for any attacks on American interests or citizens," State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said Friday.

She was reacting to a statement earlier in the day by the speaker, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, urging Iranians to kill five Americans or other Westerners for every Palestinian killed by the Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said the target should be Americans, because they were more difficult to kill than Israelis.

This "call for murder and terrorism marks another step backward for Iran away from the community of civilized nations," Tutwiler said.

"So long as the support of terrorism remains an instrument of Iranian policy, the Iranian government will guarantee its isolation and the continuing hardships of the Iranian people."

Tutwiler added that "Rafsanjani's statement is an attack on all who are trying to bring peace to the Middle East. His incitement to terrorism should be rejected by all who are committed to a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict."

Stabbing May Have Been Terrorism

News reports from Tunis over the weekend indicated that Palestinian officials had rejected the Iranian call for murder. "We are against this poisoned advice to the Palestinian people to commit international terrorism against innocent people," a Palestine Liberation Organization spokesperson was quoted as saying.

PLO leader Yasir Arafat has said the PLO formally renounced terrorism when its legislative body, the Palestine National Council, convened in Algiers last November.

Tutwiler also announced Friday that the State Department now believes that the attack by a 25-year-old knife-wielding Arab in Jerusalem last week, which left two Israelis dead and three others wounded, may have been an act of terrorism.

She said the "motivation is unclear" as to why the Arab from the West Bank town of Ramallah attacked Jews waiting for a bus in downtown Jerusalem on May 3.

But the Islamic Jihad in Palestine, a fundamentalist Moslem group believed to be mainly operating in the Gaza Strip, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

"If this claim was true, these attacks would meet our standards as an act of terrorism," Tutwiler said.

On Thursday, Tutwiler said she did not know how the State Department defined terrorism.

But later, she issued a statement saying that the department's working definition of terrorism is "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine state agents."

**TERRITORIES PUT UNDER CURFEW
AFTER RIOTS ESCALATE IN GAZA**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 7 (JTA) -- With close to 500,000 Palestinians under curfew in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, an ominous quiet prevailed in the territories Sunday, a day after some of the worst violence hit the territories since the Palestinian uprising began 17 months ago.

Official sources said three Palestinians were killed Saturday and 70 wounded in clashes between Israeli security forces and Arab rioters. Palestinian sources put the number of wounded at 142.

The casualties in Gaza were the highest for a single day since the intifada began.

Curfews were clamped on all eight refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and on the towns of Beit Hanun and Jabalya.

In the West Bank, curfews were in force in the towns of Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm, as well as the refugee camps.

They are expected to remain under curfew until after Israel celebrates the 41st anniversary of its independence on Wednesday.

Observers are not sure whether the new wave of violence stemmed from a decision by the leaders of the uprising to escalate the situation or was generated by the end of the month-long holiday of Ramadan, marked by daylight fasting and heightened religious feelings.

The recent reduction in the number of Israeli forces in the territories may also have played a part.

Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai, commander of the southern region, warned residents of the Gaza Strip on Sunday that "our patience and tolerance are not unlimited."

He said further attempts to attack Israeli soldiers would have dire consequences.

The latest riots in the Gaza Strip, the clashes between Jewish settlers and Arab residents in the West Bank last week and the probable kidnapping of another Israeli soldier, the second in three months, has fired up right-wing Cabinet ministers.

They are demanding that the Israel Defense Force take tougher measures against the Arab population.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Labor has refused to consider it, saying get-tough policies do no good, because ultimately only political action can change the situation.

**BODY OF MISSING SOLDIER FOUND
AS SEARCH FOR ANOTHER CONTINUES**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 7 (JTA) -- The body of Sgt. Avi Sasportas, a soldier missing for nearly three months, was discovered Sunday morning, in the course of a search for another soldier missing since Wednesday.

Sasportas' remains were found buried in a sandy thicket, a few miles from where he was last seen Feb. 16, waiting to hitch a ride home to Ashkelon on weekend leave.

Police pathologists said the body had been there for a considerable time.

The soldier who found it was one of thousands engaged in a massive search for another soldier, Ilan Saadon, missing since May 3, when he was last seen hitching a ride in the direction of Ashkelon.

The discovery of Sasportas raised fears that the same fate may have befallen Saadon.

Police Minister Haim Bar-Lev said, however, there was no information or evidence that the same kidnappers were involved in the two cases. "For the moment, Saadon is still classified as missing, and we are treating his case as such," the police minister said.

According to a friend who left the same Negev army base with Saadon, the soldier picked up a ride in a car occupied by two men wearing skullcaps and the garb of Hasidic Jews.

Bar-Lev said it was not unknown for criminals, whether motivated by political or other reasons, to conceal their identity by donning Hasidic garb.

"This is a ruse which, unfortunately, the police are familiar with," Bar-Lev said.

Several public figures, including Ronni Milo, the minister for environmental protection, urged the Israel Defense Force to consider imposing a ban on soldiers hitching rides.

They called on the government to provide free bus transportation for all soldiers, as it now does for women soldiers.

The grisly discovery confirmed the worst fears of the Sasportas family in Ashkelon. They begged the news media to leave them alone in their grief.

Sasportas' disappearance triggered one of the largest searches in Israel's history. For more than a week, thousands of soldiers and trained Bedouin trackers with police dogs combed the region where he was last seen on foot, while helicopters searched from the air.

THREE SOLDIERS INJURED IN LEBANON

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, May 7 (JTA) -- Three Israeli soldiers were injured Friday, when a bomb exploded on the road they were patrolling in the eastern sector of the southern Lebanon security zone.

One of the soldiers sustained moderate wounds. The others were slightly wounded, an Israel Defense Force spokesman said. They were evacuated by helicopter to Rambam Hospital in Haifa.

Two soldiers of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army were wounded by a roadside bomb in the same sector of the security zone Thursday. No group has claimed credit for either bombing.

SETTLEMENT LAUNCHED NEAR NAHALIN

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, May 7 (JTA) -- The Gush Emunim established a new settlement in the West Bank over the weekend, directly overlooking the Arab village of Nahalin.

Nahalin, which lies southwest of Bethlehem, was the scene of a pre-dawn raid by Israeli security forces on April 13, in which five Palestinians were killed and 50 wounded.

But a Gush Emunim spokesman denied any provocation was intended by its decision to locate the settlement away from its original site, several miles west of Nahalin, to within view of the village.

A spokesman for the militant settlers group said the reasons were "purely technical."

The new settlement, called Tsoref, was authorized under last year's unity coalition agreement. It will be formally dedicated Wednesday.

ISRAELI LEADERSHIP NEAR AGREEMENT ON MAJOR POINTS OF ELECTIONS PLAN

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 7 (JTA) -- There is a large area of agreement among the four senior ministers of the Likud-Labor coalition government on the elections Israel proposes to hold in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Foreign Minister Moshe Arens said Sunday.

He said they were agreed, among other things, that Israel would negotiate an interim settlement with whomever the voters choose, "even if he/they proclaims him/himself to speak for the Palestine Liberation Organization."

Arens addressed reporters shortly after he and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, both of Likud, and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, both of the Labor Party, met to discuss the evolving Israeli peace plan, which includes Palestinian elections.

Both Arens and Peres, in separate comments to journalists, seemed to anticipate agreement among the four ministers on a document that will be submitted to the Cabinet next week and then to the Bush administration in Washington.

A delegation of U.S. State Department and National Security Council officials is due here next Saturday night for talks with Israeli leaders about their proposals.

The group is headed by Dennis Ross, chief of the State Department's policy planning staff and a senior aide to Secretary of State James Baker. He will be arriving from Moscow, where Baker is to meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.

The group also will visit Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, apparently to try to ensure that the Arabs will not reject the Israeli proposals out of hand, at least at this early stage.

Split Over East Jerusalem Vote

Israelis have yet to agree on all aspects of the plan. Peres noted that the sensitive issue of the eligibility of Arab residents of East Jerusalem to vote did "not come up" at Sunday's Cabinet meeting.

Peres and Rabin favor the participation of East Jerusalem Arabs. Shamir had been opposed, though he and Arens have taken no public position in recent days.

But several other ministers are on record against allowing East Jerusalem residents to vote, for fear of weakening Israel's political and legal hold on the city.

The most scathing criticism of the entire election plan has come from Industry and Trade Minister Ariel Sharon, a hard-liner from Likud's Herut wing.

In a weekend radio interview, he called the plan "a major calamity" and "the biggest ever national blunder" that would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state "and to the partition of Jerusalem."

Political observers expect a showdown in Likud political forums, with Shamir and Arens defending the plan against critics like Sharon and Yitzhak Moda'i, the minister of economics and planning who heads Likud's Liberal Party wing.

BAKER TO PRESS SOVIET LEADERS ON MIDEAST ROLE, HUMAN RIGHTS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 7 (JTA) -- The United States will seek to find out from the Soviet Union, during Secretary of State James Baker's visit to Moscow this week, whether the Kremlin has any concrete proposals for advancing the Middle East peace process.

"We have not seen from the Soviets anything that is concrete," a senior State Department official said Friday.

Instead, the Soviets talk of playing a role in the Middle East and have offered only an "outline of broad slogans," the official told reporters during a briefing on Baker's trip.

The secretary of state will be in Moscow on Wednesday and Thursday for meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. He is also scheduled to have a long session with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Following the pattern set by the Reagan administration, the talks will cover arms control, human rights, bilateral issues and regional issues, under which the Middle East will be discussed. But the Bush administration has added a fifth agenda item, transnational issues, which will include such topics as the environment, drugs and terrorism.

Also following the Reagan pattern, there will be working groups on all the agenda items, which will then report to the two foreign ministers. The head of the U.S. delegation for the regional talks will be Dennis Ross, director of the State Department's policy planning staff.

Ross, who is Baker's key adviser on the Soviet Union and the Middle East, will go to Israel, Egypt and Jordan after his Moscow visit to brief those countries on the U.S. talks with the Soviets.

Will Meet With Refuseniks

He will also seek to follow up talks on the Middle East peace process that President Bush and Baker began with the leaders of those three countries in Washington last month, according to State Department spokesman Margaret Tutwiler.

She said that while Ross may meet with Palestinians during his visit to the Middle East, he will not meet with officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In a speech Thursday to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Baker confirmed that human rights will again "head the list" in the U.S. talks with the Soviets.

"We are encouraged by recent Soviet performances with respect to human rights and democratization, and we hope to see these changes become a permanent part of the Soviets legal system and political code," he said.

The senior State Department official said Friday that the Soviets will be pressed for the fulfillment of their promise to adopt new emigration laws so that exit visas will no longer be granted or denied on the whim of officials.

He said that while in Moscow, Baker will meet with longtime refuseniks, although he did not know which ones.

There are about 625 families who have been denied exit visas for years, mainly on the grounds that a family member possesses state secrets. The Soviets have promised to define the secrecy law and set a time limit on how long a person is considered to possess such secrets.

The human rights working group, headed by Richard Schifter, assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, is already in Moscow.

During discussions on the Middle East, the United States will not seek to press the Soviets for support of Israeli Premier Yitzhak Shamir's plan for elections in the administered territories.

Instead, the United States will outline its reasons for a step-by-step approach in the Middle East and seek to learn Moscow's ideas, the senior State Department official said.

In his speech Thursday, Baker said the Soviets will be asked to give content to their "slogan of new thinking."

While not mentioning the Middle East directly, Baker charged that "too often Soviet military aid and diplomacy have impeded the search for solutions and have even sometimes encouraged the violence."

Specifically, Baker called for Soviet cooperation to control the proliferation of advanced weapons, which are making regional wars more likely. He said such wars "are likely to escalate quickly, drawing us into conflicts that we should have helped to resolve in the first place."

He said the Soviets will also be asked to join the United States in seeking rules to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles and chemical weapons, "rules to which the Soviets have not as yet agreed."

A MORE MODEST 'SOLIDARITY' RALLY FOR SOVIET JEWS STAGED THIS YEAR

By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, May 7 (JTA) -- While glasnost and increased Soviet Jewish emigration kept mainstream Jewish organizations off the streets this year, 150 Jews rallied Sunday in front of the Soviet Mission to the United Nations.

The "Day of Solidarity" rally, sponsored by the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and the Long Island Committee for Soviet Jewry, took the place of the massive "Solidarity Sunday" rally, which in previous years drew as many as 200,000 demonstrators.

For the second straight year, the Coalition to Free Soviet Jewry voted to cancel "Solidarity Sunday," which had become an annual May event. The rally was canceled because of "an increase in emigration, the release of political prisoners and progress in human rights," according to Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, the coalition's chairman.

Those gathered at Sunday's SSSJ rally heard speeches condemning anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and continuing barriers to free emigration. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's recent initiatives were praised, but speakers said it was "not enough," and did not justify the leveling off of pressure by American Jews.

"We must tell our Jewish leaders that it's not yet 'dayenu,'" said Jacob Birnbaum, national director of the Center for Russian Jewry. "We cannot give concessions without fundamental concessions on the side of the Soviet Union."

Birnbaum said mainstream American Jewry had been "stampeded" by "Gorby-phoria."

Others at the rally said they were dismayed by "Solidarity Sunday's" cancellation.

"When the history of the Soviet Jewry movement is written, historians will ask how it is possible that, in only a few months, the infrastructure of the movement has disintegrated," said Rabbi Avraham Weiss, SSSJ chairman.

JEWISH GROUPS REMAIN DIVIDED OVER A WAIVER OF JACKSON-VANIK

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, May 7 (JTA) -- Jewish groups are split over whether to favor a relaxation of U.S. trade sanctions against the Soviet Union contained in the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Pressure to support a waiver of provisions contained in the 14-year-old amendment, which denies U.S. trade benefits to the Soviet Union because of its restrictive emigration policies, comes as Moscow is allowing the largest exodus of Soviet Jews since 1979.

Supporters of a waiver include the World Jewish Congress, the Workmen's Circle and delegates to the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council plenum in February.

They say that the current emigration figures, averaging more than 3,500 a month since January, justify a waiver of the trade sanctions, which the amendment allows if the Soviets have demonstrated sustained improvement in their record on emigration.

Waiving the sanctions would restore "most-favored-nation" trade status to the Soviet Union, giving the Soviets favorable tariff treatment for their goods.

Proponents of a waiver argue that this would encourage the Soviets to continue their increasingly liberal emigration policies.

They also say that in the period between a recommendation and the Bush administration's actual call for a waiver, the Soviets would be eager to keep emigration levels high, or revamp their policies altogether, to influence the debate.

Codified Emigration Practices

But others, including the Washington-based Union of Councils of Soviet Jews and former prisoner of Zion Natan Sharansky, oppose a waiver until the Soviets put onto the books new legislation guaranteeing the right to emigrate.

"The only guarantee of sustained, high levels is the institutionalized 'emigration laws and policies' " called for in Jackson-Vanik, according to a policy paper prepared by the Union of Councils and released last week.

The laws they want to see codified include abolition of the "family reunification" criterion, currently a Soviet citizen's sole legal basis for requesting an exit visa; opportunities for legal appeals to those denied emigration on security grounds; and a mechanism for resolving long-term refusenik cases.

The Union of Councils says an estimated 2,000 refuseniks remain in the Soviet Union, and as many as 5,000 more could be refused permission by the end of the year.

"Given the absence of economic progress, severe unrest among ethnic minorities and rising popular anti-Semitism," the Union of Councils maintains, "there is no basis to predict how long current policies or the recent relatively high monthly emigration figures will be sustained."

Following the Union of Council's lead, various Jewish groups will formalize their stands on Jackson-Vanik over the next two months.

On Monday, World Jewish Congress leaders meeting in Montreal will debate the issue. Former U.S. Rep. Charles Vanik (D-Ohio), who co-authored the bill and now supports a one-year waiver, will attend the WJC meeting.

WJC President Edgar Bronfman has all but called for a waiver, saying the Soviets have gone

far toward reaching the emigration levels required under Jackson-Vanik.

Two Key Meetings Next Month

The National Conference on Soviet Jewry, which has dropped outright opposition to a waiver in favor of an ongoing process of "review and assessment" of trade policy, could make a decision as early as June 13, when its national leadership meets in Washington.

"We have not reached a final decision," Martin Wenick, NCSJ's new executive director, told reporters last Thursday at a National Press Club breakfast in Washington. "My sense is that there is still a healthy debate going on" within the Jewish community.

The conference is also known to favor codification of Soviet emigration policy into law before a total relaxation of sanctions.

Also in June, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council will meet in Cincinnati to review NJCRAC's annual Joint Program Plan, a policy blueprint followed by community relations councils across the country.

While delegates to the NJCRAC plenum in February voted in support of a waiver, they agreed not to implement the policy until the National Conference takes action.

The Workmen's Circle decided last month to call for a waiver, becoming the first Jewish group to do so explicitly.

As they did when the amendment was first adopted in 1975, government officials will look to the Jewish community for guidance before moving to waive Jackson-Vanik.

But the Bush administration's task may be complicated if the WJC, Workmen's Circle and possibly NJCRAC, the National Conference and others line up on one side of the issue, while the Union of Councils, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and Sharansky's Jerusalem-based Soviet Jewry Zionist Forum line up on the other.

To waive Jackson-Vanik, President Bush would need to notify Congress that he had received assurances of changes in Soviet emigration policy and that he favored granting the Soviets "most-favored-nation" trade status.

Congress would then have 60 days to overturn the president's call or work toward fashioning a new U.S.-Soviet trade agreement.

U.S. Hoping For Unity

"Most-favored-nation" status could be withdrawn after a waiver, but both sides acknowledge the process would be a difficult one.

Proponents of a waiver say it would be better for the Jewish community to recommend a waiver before the administration does. To wait for the administration "would undermine the Soviet perception of the influential leadership role played by the organized Jewish community," according to a NJCRAC document on the pros and cons of the issue.

But opponents say the Bush administration is not yet eager to call for the waiver. Because the number of exportable Soviet goods is so low, they say, there is little business pressure building for a change in Soviet trade policy.

Jewish groups and administration officials both would prefer a unified Jewish response on Jackson-Vanik. But unless the Soviets move dramatically in the coming months, that unity is not likely to be forthcoming.

(JTA correspondent David Friedman in Washington contributed to this report.)