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14 KILLED, 27 WOUNDED AFTER ARAB FORCES ISRAELI BUS INTO A RAVINE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 6 (JTA). -- Fourteen people were killed and 27 injured Thursday, when an Arab man commandeered a passenger bus and forced it off the road, sending it plunging more than 100 feet down a rocky hillside, where it burst into flames.

The Arab, who was one of the passengers, shouted "Allah akhbar" (God is great) as he grabbed the steering wheel of the bus, which was on its way to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

The tragedy, by far the deadliest since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising 19 months ago, occurred shortly before noon on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, near the Arab village of Abu Ghosh, about 10 miles from Jerusalem.

The injured included the would-be suicide attacker, who was hospitalized in Jerusalem under heavy police guard, and the bus driver, Moshe Elul.

The steep slope of the terraced, rock-strewn hillside made rescue operations difficult.

Israel Defense Force helicopters were called in to evacuate seven seriously injured persons. Those who sustained moderate to minor injuries were taken by Magen David Adom ambulances to three Jerusalem-area hospitals and to the government-run Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer.

The dead were taken care of by officials of the hevra kadisha, the Jerusalem burial society.

The No. 405 Egged bus left Tel Aviv at 11:15 a.m. local time, with 42 passengers and the driver. The police said two passengers were unaccounted for. If they were only slightly injured, they may have walked away from the scene.

A Resident Of The Territories

The driver gave an account of the incident from his hospital bed. He said his hour-long trip from Tel Aviv had been routine for the first 30 minutes, until he was approached by a male passenger.

"I thought he had come to ask me a question, as frequently happens," Elul said. "But he suddenly jumped on me, braced his legs on a side bracket and jerked the wheel to the right.

"The bus veered to the right and plunged down the very steep hillside, overturning several times and landing on its roof, when it burst into flames."

Police Commissioner David Kraus said the assailant was identified as a resident of the administered territories. He would give no further details while the investigation is in progress.

The man reportedly has refused to answer questions. Israel Radio reported that a relative who might have pertinent information has been detained.

Kraus said the incident was the second such attack on a bus in recent months. But the traffic manager of Egged, which operates Israel's inter-urban bus service, said there had been two prior incidents.

In both cases, the drivers managed to overpower their assailants, sustaining only minor injuries, he said.

The Magen David Adom, Israel's equivalent

of the Red Cross, dispatched two ambulances from Jerusalem only minutes after the crash. It also sent out a call for volunteers, 60 of whom reached the scene within minutes.

A paramedic told reporters that "the terrain made it impossible for the ambulances to reach the overturned bus."

A small helicopter managed to land on a narrow ledge half way down the hillside. It ferried bodies and the injured from there to larger helicopters and ambulances on the road.

Americans Among The Injured

The U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem said five American tourists were among the injured. Their names were not released pending notification of their families.

One American woman in the bus said she was on the way to Jerusalem to watch her daughter compete in the gymnastic finals of the 13th Maccabiah, the Jewish Olympic-style games under way in Israel this week.

In Washington, State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said, "We condemn this senseless, tragic incident, which again points to the urgent need to replace violence with dialogue and accommodation.

"Our condolences go to the families of the victims of the crash, and we wish a speedy recovery to them," he said.

In Israel, the bus attack was denounced by politicians of all stripes, with those on the right demanding "immediate, maximum, harsh measures" to stamp out the Palestinian uprising and those on the left stressing the need for a political solution to halt murderous attacks of this kind.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Likud termed the attack the work of a "mad terrorist," a crime "typical of the intifada murderers."

Vice Premier Shimon Peres of Labor denounced the attack and said investigators should establish whether the attacker acted alone or on the orders of an organized terrorist group.

Knesset member Ronni Milo of Likud said the attack should be used to press the United States to halt its contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization in Tunis.

But as of evening in Israel, no terrorist group had claimed responsibility.

IN WAKE OF TRAGEDY, LABOR DEFERS DECISION ABOUT QUITTING GOVERNMENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 6 (JTA) -- The Labor Party postponed until Monday the Executive meeting it was supposed to hold Thursday to consider withdrawing from its coalition partnership with Likud.

The meeting was announced Wednesday night, after the Likud Central Committee overwhelmingly adopted a toughly worded resolution on Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's peace plan.

It was called off until Monday because of national shock over the terrorist-related bus disaster on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway Thursday, which claimed 14 lives.

Many Laborites were seething over the set of principles Shamir agreed to abide by in implementing his peace initiative. They include a

number of limitations on both the proposed Palestinian elections and the terms of a final settlement -- provisions the Palestinians almost certainly will not accept.

A group of 17 Labor members of the Knesset who call themselves "Force 17" indicated before the bus tragedy that they planned to urge the party to quit the government immediately.

The group includes Haim Ramon, chairman of Labor's Knesset faction; Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin, who is close to Labor Party leader Shimon Peres; and Uzi Baram, the party's former secretary-general.

But their influence, if not their ardor, might be cooled by the meeting's postponement, political observers said.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, whose position on the issue could be decisive, called Thursday for an "unhasty" process of decision-making, over a period of "weeks but not months."

Rabin is credited with helping Shamir draft the peace plan.

Peres Studying Political Scene

The defense minister said in a radio interview that the most serious single element in the resolution adopted by Likud on Wednesday is the freeze on negotiations until the Palestinian uprising is completely suppressed.

He said that provision could stifle hopes that agreement can be reached even on the form the proposed elections in the territories will take.

Should that be the case, Rabin said, Labor would be unable to continue its partnership with Likud.

Shamir's media spokesman, Avi Pazner, said the Likud resolution did not intend to rule out "unofficial talks" with local Palestinians.

According to observers, Peres is quietly studying the fragmented political scene to determine whether it would be possible for Labor to form a narrow-based government in coalition with some of the smaller parties, if it decides to end its alliance with Likud.

The National Religious Party seems an unlikely partner, in light of its enthusiastic support for the Likud resolution.

But opinion is divided in the ultra-Orthodox Shas and Agudat Yisrael parties, which, with 11 Knesset seats between them, hold the balance of power.

AMERICANS EXPRESS HOPE THAT SHAMIR HAS NOT ABROGATED PEACE INITIATIVE By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, July 6 (JTA) -- U.S. officials and most American Jewish leaders appear to accept Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's assertion that he has not abrogated his government's peace initiative in the wake of Wednesday's Likud Central Committee meeting.

But many expressed concern that by agreeing to abide by tough new conditions for implementing the peace plan, Shamir has damaged the chance of winning backing for it from Palestinians or even members of Likud's coalition partner, the Labor Party.

The ambivalence is due to uncertainty about the effect those conditions will have on the terms of the government's four-point peace plan.

Outlined by Shamir in an emphatic speech to the party faithful, the conditions include barring East Jerusalem Palestinians from participating in

the elections the initiative proposes, including out the creation of a Palestinian state; and calling for continued Jewish settlement of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

If seen by Labor or the Palestinians as the last word on the peace plan, the conditions could spell its doom.

In Washington, State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said Thursday that the United States continues to support Israel's peace initiative. But he was unwilling to conjecture whether Shamir's speech "constitutes a proposal by the Israeli government."

He did warn, however, that "partisan declarations, particularly if they appear to be more restrictive or to impose conditions, do not advance the prospects for peace."

Impediment To Broad Support?

Among American Jewish leaders issuing statements, Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, seemed to have the fewest reservations about Shamir's moves.

"I am gratified that the government's peace initiative remains intact," said Reich.

Other groups were more equivocal.

Two officials of the American Jewish Congress said they were "pleased that the basic proposal for elections has been affirmed by the Likud's Central Committee."

But Robert Lifton and Henry Siegman, who are respectively president and executive director of the group, said they were also "deeply concerned that the conditions reportedly attached to the plan may present major impediments to its implementation."

Sholom Comay, president of the American Jewish Committee, also urged in a statement that "no steps be taken to weaken the broad support for this proposal by the constituted elements of the national unity government."

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said Shamir had not amended the peace initiative, but merely affirmed well-known planks in his party's platform.

Both Pragmatist And Ideologue

"I believe that this is a creative political maneuver by Shamir, who is both a pragmatist and an ideologue at the same time," Foxman said in an interview.

"It would be as if Labor met tomorrow and affirmed territories-for-peace. That doesn't mean that becomes part of the peace initiative," he said.

Foxman said both the U.S. government and sincere Palestinians would see Shamir's move for what it is: "an event within the political arena and no more."

Still, if the national unity government is to remain intact, the Labor Party will have to view Shamir's new conditions as a political maneuver and nothing more.

The party has called a meeting for Monday to debate the issue and its continued participation in the coalition government.

Menachem Rosensaft, president of the Labor Zionist Alliance, said he hoped Labor "would indeed seriously reassess its role in the national unity government lest they become nothing more than an appendage to the Likud."

(JTA correspondent Howard Rosenberg in Washington contributed to this report.)

U.S. REFUSES TO BLOCK RESOLUTION CRITICIZING ISRAELI DEPORTATIONS

By Allison Kaplan

UNITED NATIONS, July 6 (JTA) -- The United States declined to exercise its veto Thursday to block a Security Council resolution criticizing Israel for deporting eight Palestinian activists from the West Bank and Gaza Strip on June 29.

The resolution, adopted by a vote of 14-0, says the Security Council "deeply regrets" the June 29 deportations and calls on Israel to discontinue the practice.

U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering said the American position on the issue is clear. The United States has spoken out numerous times against deportations. They were "deeply regrettable," he said.

Pickering said the United States abstained because it did not think that raising the issue in the Security Council now would help reduce tensions or restore calm in the region.

"Neither more deportations nor more resolutions are likely to serve the efforts in which we all share our responsibility to bring the parties to the negotiating table," the American envoy said.

Sources here said a U.S. veto was avoided by softening the language of the original draft resolution circulated to Security Council members.

The words "deeply regrets" were substituted for the word "deplores" contained in the earlier draft.

Israel's acting Ambassador Johanan Bein defended the deportations on the grounds that they were necessary to prevent acts of violence.

"We are not advancing some abstract notion or concept divorced from reality. We are talking about the lives of Israeli citizens -- men, women and children," the Israeli ambassador stated.

Zehdi Terzi, the Palestine Liberation Organization's observer at the United Nations, was invited to attend the Security Council session. He expressed satisfaction with the resolution.

FRENCH AND SOVIET LEADERS ASSAIL SHAMIR STAND ON PEACE CONFERENCE

PARIS, July 6 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's opposition to an international peace conference is the chief obstacle to peace in the Middle East, French President Francois Mitterrand and visiting Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev agreed Wednesday.

Gorbachev said an international conference is the "only rational approach" to solving the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The two leaders spoke at a joint news conference here at the end of Gorbachev's two-day visit to France. The Middle East apparently was high on their agenda.

According to Gorbachev, a peace conference "would meet the interests of all the parties and the security needs of the State of Israel."

But such a conference can be convened only if agreed to by all parties to the conflict, Mitterrand said. "And Mr. Shamir's plan is opposed to the conference."

He was referring to Shamir's peace initiative, which calls for, among other things, Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Shamir opposes the international conference concept, claiming that such a forum would subject Israel to undue world pressure. He prefers direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

U.S. AND ISRAEL HIT IMPASSE IN EFFORT TO PHASE OUT TARIFFS

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, July 6 (JTA) -- The Bush administration has rejected an Israeli formula for both countries to phase out all remaining tariffs on non-military goods, U.S. and Israeli sources have confirmed.

But the United States has agreed to consider an Israeli proposal to eliminate Customs user fees on services provided to goods entering the other's country, as proposed in trade legislation currently before Congress.

Those decisions were made in Jerusalem two weeks ago at the biannual U.S.-Israeli trade talks set up to monitor the 1985 Free Trade Area agreement. Under the accord, both countries are supposed to lift all tariffs on non-defense goods by Jan. 1, 1995.

Most tariffs on such goods have been lifted. But those on products that either country considers most import-sensitive are not expected to be phased out before 1995.

The United States considers farm products particularly import-sensitive.

An Israeli Embassy official here who attended the talks accused the Bush administration of succumbing to pressure from pro-agriculture members of Congress and lobbying groups.

The California Tomato Growers Association, for instance, opposed removing U.S. tariffs on Israeli tomato paste.

U.S. lobbying groups also are concerned about the prospect of duty-free Israeli onions and concentrated orange juice, the Israeli said.

A U.S. official who attended the talks said there was "some merit" to arguments made by U.S. farm lobbyists.

Arab Group Makes New Move

At the talks, the main Israeli concern was with U.S. defense procurement laws that favor domestic defense contractors.

Israel also complained about a regulation approved in last year's trade bill that has led to new marking requirements on jewelry.

Many of the U.S. concerns were raised in a letter U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills sent June 1 to Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

High on the U.S. wish list was a request that Israel fulfill its promise to phase out the Tama, a tax assessed at Customs, based on prices on the Israeli market.

In another trade development, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has asked Hills to reconsider her April decision to continue Israel's participation in the Generalized System of Preferences program.

The program, in effect since 1975, allows various Israeli goods to enter the United States duty-free.

The ADC sought last fall to have the trade privilege revoked on the grounds that Israel allegedly violated the rights of Palestinian workers, including the right to organize.

But Hills found that Israel met all of the U.S. criteria for receiving the trade privilege. Her decision was approved by the White House.

Reacting to the ADC's latest move, a well-placed administration official said, "We don't know quite what to do with it. I don't think the president is going to reverse his decision if that's what they want."

**U.S. RUNNING SECOND TO ISRAEL
AFTER FIRST DAYS OF MACCABIAH**

TEL AVIV, July 6 (JTA) -- American athletes are swiftly racking up gold and silver medals at the 13th Maccabiah games, which opened Monday at Ramat Gan stadium and continued during the week with events in various parts of Israel.

But in the race for medals, Israeli athletes were ahead by seven at midweek.

The U.S. contingent of 520 athletes is the largest besides Israel among the 44 countries participating in the Olympic-style competitions.

The U.S. rowing team earned two gold medals and a silver on the Sea of Galilee, led by Olympian Sherri Cassuto's victory in the Women's Single Sculls.

At Ramat Gan, the American wrestlers took three gold and three silver in the Greco-Roman-style finals.

The U.S. open track and field and swimming teams will compete this weekend. But the U.S. junior swimmers swam to seven medals, with 16-year-old Adam Vann claiming two gold ones for himself.

Vann, from Potomac, Md., stands 6 foot 3 and weighs 170 pounds. He promises to be a top American Olympic swimmer.

In other early-round action, the United States trounced the Colombian soccer squad 10-0. The Americans also routed Brazil in basketball, 107-46.

But the United States was defeated by Israel in masters basketball by a score of 112-96.

The U.S. softball squad began the defense of its title with a 7-0 one-hitter against Israel, pitched by Dave Blackburn.

In judo, two-time national champion Damon Kieve of San Francisco took top honors in the over 95 kgs. division. Pete Glikshtern placed second in the up to 86 kgs. class.

The United States won all but one of its second-round tennis matches and remained undefeated in table tennis.

After two full days of competition, Israel led the medal count with 37, including 18 gold medals. The United States was second with 30 medals, 10 of them gold.

**SOVIET ENVOY STORMS OUT OF RECEPTION
By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, July 6 (JTA) -- The highest-ranking Soviet diplomat in Israel walked out of a reception here Wednesday, saying that he was offended by the political overtones and anti-Soviet sentiments expressed by some of those attending.

Georg Martirosov, the senior member of the Soviet consular delegation, stormed out of a reception honoring Jewish athletes from Soviet Lithuania who are participating in the 13th Maccabiah, the Jewish Olympic-style sports competitions held every four years.

Martirosov complained that the Maccabiah was being politicized.

He was referring directly to Natan Sharansky and other former refusenik activists who used the reception, hosted by Bank Leumi, as an occasion to attack Soviet policy and urge the Kremlin to allow all Jews to emigrate.

Martirosov said he "strongly opposes attempts by some people to use sports for politics." He said the remarks put the Soviet Lithuanian athletes in an embarrassing position.

**CANTORS END TOUR OF EAST EUROPE
WITH ROUSING CONCERT IN BUDAPEST**

BUDAPEST, July 6 (JTA) -- Five cantors from the United States, Canada and Israel completed a concert tour of Eastern Europe Tuesday night at Budapest's Dohany Synagogue, where they received a wildly enthusiastic reception.

It was the final concert for the group, which arrived here fresh from triumphs in Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa and Kiev. The cantors performed both liturgical and Jewish folk music.

The tour, sponsored by the American Society for the Advancement of Cantorial Arts and the Gila and Haim Wiener Foundation, marked the first time Israeli cantors sang in the Soviet Union, according to Haim Wiener of Miami, president of the society.

He said he was convinced that cantorial concerts could be "an extremely important factor in reviving Yiddishkeit in Eastern Europe. Chazanut is a language that every Jew can understand," he said.

The cantors who participated in the two-week concert tour were Moshe Stern of Jerusalem and Arie Braun of Tel Aviv, David Bagley and Louis Danto of Toronto, and Pinchas Rabinovics of Los Angeles.

They were accompanied by Daniel Gildar of Philadelphia, who also is a cantor.

Wiener said the group found "particularly in the USSR, a profoundly sad lack of knowledge of many of the basic fundamentals of the Jewish faith and liturgy, the result of 70 years of being deprived of the opportunity for Jewish education."

"Yet at the same time, there is a powerful thirst for Jewish identification," he said.

**BRITAIN PROPOSES CHANGING LAWS
REGULATING SLAUGHTER OF CATTLE
By Hyam Corney
Jewish Chronicle**

LONDON, July 6 (JTA) -- London's Jewish cattle-slaughteringers are fearful that the Agriculture Ministry's proposed changes in laws governing shechita (ritual slaughter) will make it harder, if not impossible, to perform their tasks in compliance with halacha.

But Britain's chief rabbi, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, does not share their apprehension over the proposed legislation, and opinion in the Orthodox community is divided.

Jakobovits is scheduled to meet next week with London shochetim. The chief rabbi is "confident that he will be able to fully satisfy their concerns," Shimon Cohen, executive director of the rabbi's office, told the Jewish Chronicle.

The London shochetim are concerned about the wording of the proposed regulations, which would require the shochet to use "a single, uninterrupted cut" when killing the animal.

Ritual slaughter is generally performed with a continuous, back-and-forth cut, rather than a single one.

Another area of concern is the proposed change of the type of casting pen into which the animals are placed prior to slaughter.

Under pressure from animal welfare groups, the Agriculture Ministry ruled that the present pen, in which the animal is turned upside down, must be replaced within two years by one in which the animal remains upright.

There have also been recent attempts to ban kosher slaughter in Sweden and the Netherlands.