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REPORT CLAIMS IRAN PAID ABU NIDAL TO MURDER BELGIAN JEWISH LEADER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV Dec. 11 (JTA) -- Iran paid Abu Nidal's terrorist gang to murder the leader of Belgium's Jewish community, Dr. Joseph Wybran, on Oct. 3, according to "well-informed Israeli sources" cited in a newspaper report here.

The story, headlined in the Jerusalem Post on Monday, stressed that Abu Nidal's Fatah Revolutionary Council is still active in the international terrorist arena as a kill-for-pay operation. Recent reports in the news media have claimed that Abu Nidal himself is ill and that the terrorist group is inactive.

Wybran, 49, was chairman of the Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jewish Organizations, the umbrella organization of Belgium's 30,000-member Jewish community.

He was shot to death in the parking lot of Erasmus Hospital in Brussels, where he headed the department of immunology, hematology and blood transfusions. The murder remains unsolved.

According to the Jerusalem Post, Wybran's murder was ordered by Iran to avenge the abduction of Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid by the Israel Defense Force in Lebanon in July.

Obeid is the spiritual leader of a faction of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shi'ite extremist group that has close ties with Iran.

Pressure by Hezbollah persuaded the Islamic government in Teheran to put out a contract on Wybran, the report said. It said Abu Nidal had been seeking financial support from Iran to replace his former sponsors, Syria and Libya.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin hinted at such a connection when he told an audience in Tel Aviv last week that Iran has been in contact recently with "a variety of international terrorist organizations."

Rabin warned that Israel could expect terrorist acts "coming from Iran's direction" in the near future. But the Jerusalem Post report did not explain why Wybran would be targeted by Iran.

The only controversial issue in which he was directly involved concerned the relocation of a Carmelite convent from the grounds of the former Auschwitz death camp in Poland. Wybran visited Poland only a week before his death to discuss the matter with government and church officials.

IRAQI ROCKET LAUNCH SPARKS CONCERN IT IS DEVELOPING POWERFUL MISSILES

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- U.S. officials have expressed concern about Iraq's successful launch into space last week of a three-stage rocket and its apparent development of a long-range missile capability.

The technological breakthrough, they fear, could erode Israel's strategic edge over its Arab neighbors.

State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher confirmed the launch of "an Iraqi rocket capable of putting a satellite into orbit."

But U.S. officials would not comment on reports that Iraq has developed two surface-to-surface missiles, each with a range of 1,240 miles.

The Washington Post quoted Hussein Kamel, Iraq's minister of industry and military industrialization, as making such a statement Dec. 7 on Baghdad state radio.

Iraq currently possesses a modified version of the Soviet-made SCUD short-range missile, which has a range of about 560 miles, the Post reported.

A State Department source said Iraq has been working to upgrade its SCUDs since the Iran-Iraq War, when they were deployed against Teheran, Iran's capital, in the so-called "War of the Cities."

"We know (the Iraqis) have been working on missile technology because they are using it," the source said.

Another official said, "We have expressed our strong opposition to production of this capability from any source," including Israel, which has developed a Jericho I ballistic missile and is reportedly testing a newer version, the Jericho II.

No Chinese Sale Planned

Israeli Embassy spokeswoman Ruth Yaron had no comment Monday when asked about Iraq's new missile advances.

At the State Department, meanwhile, Boucher was asked Monday to comment on reports that China is planning to sell M-9 short-range missiles to Syria or other Middle Eastern countries.

Such a missile is capable of carrying nuclear or chemical weapons for a range of about 375 miles, which would for the first time allow Syria to threaten air bases in southern Israel, the Reuters news agency reported.

Boucher responded by saying that the United States was monitoring Chinese military sales. But he quoted a Chinese official as calling reports of a pending sale "groundless."

"Except for the sale of a few missiles to Saudi Arabia, China has not sold and has no plan to sell any nuclear missiles to any country in the Middle East," Boucher quoted the Chinese official as saying in remarks reported Sunday by China's official news agency.

Last year, China sold CSS-2 intermediate-range missiles to Saudi Arabia. China told the United States that it would not sell that particular missile to anyone else.

However, it has not provided any assurances against sales of the M-9, Richard Clarke, assistant secretary of state for politico-military affairs, told Congress recently.

SHAMIR AND SHARON CAMPS PREPARING FOR LIKUD CENTRAL COMMITTEE BATTLE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is looking forward to a showdown with opponents of his peace initiative when the Likud Central Committee convenes, probably within the next three weeks.

He expects the meeting to clear the air and affirm his support by the party rank and file.

The timing of the Central Committee meeting depends on the date set for Foreign Minister Moshe Arens' meeting in Washington with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Egyptian Minister Esmat Abdel Meguid of Egypt.

That meeting is expected to take place in early January.

Three Likud ministers opposed to Shamir's plan have demanded that the Central Committee convene before Arens' departure for the trilateral parity.

The Washington meeting is intended to lay the groundwork for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in Cairo early next year.

It became definite after the State Department's announcement last week that Egypt had accepted Baker's five-point proposal for the dialogue, which Israel had accepted on Nov. 5.

The dialogue is supposed to lead to Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, proposed by Shamir and approved by the Cabinet last May. Those elected would negotiate with Israel on Palestinian autonomy in the territories.

Ministers Ariel Sharon, David Levy and Yitzhak Moda'i regard the idea as potentially disastrous for Israel.

They failed to block the initiative at a meeting of the Central Committee last spring, but managed to attach conditions to the elections that, if adhered to, would effectively kill the plan.

But Shamir is more confident now of his ability to turn back his opponents. He wields the double power of prime minister and party leader, and his closest ally, Arens, controls the party apparatus.

Nevertheless, both camps will be lobbying vigorously in the various Likud branches all over the country during the next three weeks.

PROGRESSIVE GROUPS PROTEST BILL BLOCKING FUNDS TO ARAB GROUPS By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- Human rights activists in Israel and abroad are organizing to defeat a proposed amendment to Israel's anti-terrorist laws that would block the flow of overseas funds to Arab welfare and charitable organizations in Israel.

In the Knesset, 14 lawmakers so far have signed a petition urging Justice Minister Dan Meridor to drop or at least delay action on the bill, contending that its passage would damage basic human rights.

A similar appeal was contained in a cable sent to Meridor on Dec. 8 by 43 American Jews.

The measure would allow the Israeli authorities to confiscate money or property bought with funds alleged to have come from terrorist sources.

It passed its first reading in the Knesset last May, with the support of a powerful bloc of Likud members, and was reintroduced on Dec. 1 for a second reading.

The Justice Ministry has described the amendment as a "tool to prevent the economic takeover by the terrorist organizations of Israel's Arabs."

The Knesset petitioners argued that it would not achieve that goal but rather would shatter "accepted human rights and would be used for the political prosecution of minorities in the country."

The chief object of criticism is a provision that allows the security authorities to seize any items donated to an organization if they suspect the source of funds was a terrorist group.

That would create an absurd situation, the critics say, in which both a donor and a recipient of funds would have to give up property, such as

kindergarten equipment or libraries, because they did not know where the money originated.

The Coalition for the Freedom of Organization, which represents about 100 Arab community organizations and human rights groups in Israel, held a news conference on the matter Sunday.

Impact On Democratic Character

The campaign in the United States was organized in New York by the Progressive Zionist Caucus and the International Center for Peace in the Middle East. Both are considered close to the Peace Now movement in Israel.

The signatories of the cable to Meridor included academicians, jurists, rabbis, scholars and community leaders, many of them public figures in the United States.

They warned that "if enacted, the amendment would provide the police and security forces in Israel with virtually absolute powers to close Israeli Arab charitable organizations, to confiscate their assets and to detain their activists."

The group expressed concern that the measure "would greatly affect the basic human and civil rights of Israeli citizens, violate their right to due process and severely erode Israel's democratic character and image internationally."

When Meridor introduced the bill in the Knesset on Dec. 4, he admitted he felt "uncomfortable" with it.

He said he was convinced, however, that the country has no choice, because it is in a state of war, meaning, apparently, the intifada.

Likud supporters of the bill, such as Uriel Lynn, chairman of the Knesset's Legal Committee, and Dr. Uzi Landau insisted over the weekend that it is necessary to prevent the Palestine Liberation Organization from "taking further control of Israel's Arab population."

PALESTINIAN RIOTS SPREAD TO JORDAN ON SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF INTIFADA

JERUSALEM, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- The Palestinian uprising, which began in the Israeli-administered West Bank and Gaza Strip two years ago, spilled briefly into Jordan on its second anniversary over the weekend.

Jordanian riot police used tear gas and fired into the air as they battled Palestinian demonstrators in the Baqa refugee camp near Amman on Saturday.

But the Palestine Liberation Organization reportedly kept the riots from spreading.

The disturbances were a reminder that at least half of Jordan's 3 million citizens are Palestinians.

About 300,000 of them live in squalid conditions in 10 refugee camps all over the country. Most of the camps are controlled by the PLO's Al Fatah faction, led by Yasir Arafat.

The disturbances that broke out were contrary to PLO policy.

Israeli military observers say the PLO is determined not to allow the intifada to spread to the east bank of the Jordan River, since it considers King Hussein an asset to the uprising.

The PLO also fears that a "second front" in Jordan would jeopardize whatever the intifada has achieved in Israeli-controlled territory.

Hussein seems to appreciate the PLO's moderating influence over the Palestinians in his kingdom. After riots protesting the rise of food prices last April, the king openly thanked the PLO for its help in restoring order.

QUAYLE SEEKS SOVIET AID IN REPEALING INFAMOUS U.N. RESOLUTION ON ZIONISM By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- Vice President Dan Quayle, cloaked in a black-and-violet Yeshiva University gown, called Sunday on "the Soviet Union and other nations" to co-sponsor a United Nations resolution with the United States that would rescind the world body's infamous 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism.

The new resolution, he said, "would affirm that Zionism is what Soviet Foreign Minister (Andrei) Gromyko rightly called it back in 1948: the national liberation movement of the Jewish people," he told an audience gathered for Yeshiva University's annual Chanukah convocation.

Quayle repeated his message later Sunday evening, this time surrounded by a dais of more than 100 Holocaust survivors and dignitaries, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel and New York Mayor Ed Koch.

The vice president's staunchly pro-Israel statements received a warm reception at both the Yeshiva University affair, where Quayle accepted an honorary doctorate, and at the State of Israel Bonds Organization's Holocaust remembrance dinner, which drew a crowd of 1,500.

During both his speeches, Quayle steered clear of the nuts-and-bolts of the Middle East peace process, omitting any specific mention of either the Israeli peace initiative or the U.S. State Department's five-point plan for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

When asked about the current negotiations at a news conference held after the Yeshiva University ceremony, Quayle said simply that "we are moving forward with the five-point plan" and that he recognized that "there are going to be differences" between the participants.

But to his Jewish audiences, Quayle kept his focus centered on the United Nations issue, pledging that he would tell U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar in a meeting Monday that "for the U.N. to regain its stature, it must rescind the odious resolution equating Zionism with racism."

U.S. Pays United Nations Dues

A spokesman for the secretary-general said Monday afternoon that Quayle and Perez de Cuellar did discuss the Zionism resolution, though the bulk of their conversation centered on events in Central America and the Bush-Gorbachev summit off the coast of Malta.

During the meeting, Quayle gave Perez de Cuellar a \$65 million check, representing the U.S. government's dues obligations to the international organization.

The United States threatened only last week to withhold its U.N. contribution if the General Assembly were to pass a resolution elevating the Palestine Liberation Organization's status to that of an observer state.

In Washington, the State Department said Monday that the United States had "mentioned the question" of repealing the 1975 resolution to the Soviets and will continue to discuss it with the Soviets and others.

"We would be pleased if the Soviets would co-sponsor a resolution to repeal the infamous equation of Zionism with racism. But they have so far not indicated whether or not they will do so," said Richard Boucher, the department's deputy spokesman.

In presenting Quayle with his honorary degree Sunday, Yeshiva University President Norman Lamm found a biblical parallel for the rocky times Quayle has undergone since his debut under the national spotlight.

"Like another Dan, the biblical Daniel," Lamm said, "your meteoric rise to power has led, at times, through the lion's den of biting and unforgiving criticism."

When accepting the doctoral degree, Quayle offered a little self-criticism, poking fun at his own poor academic record, which made headlines during the 1988 presidential campaign.

Citing Albert Einstein's famous definition of an education as "that which remains when one has forgotten everything he learned in school," Quayle said wryly that he found the definition "comforting," since "for some of us, forgetting what we learned in school isn't all that difficult."

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

CANADIAN SUPREME COURT HEARS CHALLENGES TO HATE-CRIMES LAW By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- Canada's 20-year-old anti-hate law, considered by many to be the toughest legislation of its kind anywhere, was challenged last week in the country's highest court.

Seven Supreme Court justices heard arguments by lawyers for three notorious hate-mongers who are appealing their convictions under anti-hate and human rights statutes.

Another case, with possibly the most far-reaching implications, involves former high school teacher Jim Keegstra, whose conviction for preaching anti-Semitism in his Eckville, Alberta, classroom was overturned by the Alberta Court of Appeals.

All of the cases have aroused intense interest in government, legal and human-rights circles. Many groups, including Jewish organizations, have filed friend-of-the-court briefs upholding the law.

The Alberta court ruled that the anti-hate law was invalid because "hate" was not defined, the law's "sweep was too broad" and no injury had been proven.

Eckville, a farm community of about 900, has no Jews. Legal action was brought against Keegstra by parents who complained their children were being indoctrinated with hate propaganda.

The justices are also hearing appeals by Don Andrews and Bob Smith of Toronto, who were convicted under the same law for publishing a hate-mongering periodical called the Nationalist Report. They are represented by J.D. Coombs and David Harris of Toronto.

A third case is the appeal of John Ross Taylor, 77, who was convicted of violating the Canadian Human Rights Code.

Taylor has a record of pro-Nazi propaganda dating from the 1930s. His latest conviction was for transmitting anti-Jewish and anti-black messages by telephone.

Keegstra and Taylor are both represented by Douglas Christie, who is also defense counsel for Imre Finta, who is currently facing charges in Canada's first-ever war crimes trial, which opened in Toronto on Nov. 21.

The Supreme Court heard all of the cases simultaneously because of their similarities. The judgments are not expected to be announced for at least a month.

NEW EAST GERMAN LEADER'S ANCESTRY CAUSE OF PRIDE YET CONCERN TO JEWS

By David Kantor

WEST BERLIN, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- East Germany's Jewish community has had mixed reactions to the selection of a young reform-minded lawyer of Jewish ancestry to serve as the new chairman of the ruling Communist Party.

Gregor Gysi, 41, was elected Saturday to succeed Egon Krenz as chairman of the party, which has been badly shaken by disclosures of high living and corruption.

Krenz himself replaced longtime party boss Erich Honecker on Oct. 18. But popular outrage over the recently exposed abuses under Honecker forced Krenz to resign on Dec. 3.

Gysi, whose father was born Jewish, is not a practicing Jew, but has attended cultural events sponsored by East Berlin's 200-member Jewish community organization.

His elevation to leadership of the no-longer-dominant Communist Party has brought pride to the Jewish community, but also apprehension over anti-Semitism, which the old regime denied existed but has now openly acknowledged to be active in the German Democratic Republic.

The Jewish community is also concerned that it is a Jew who is heading a party in decline, not likely ever to regain its all-powerful status in the East German state.

The new chairman's father, Klaus Gysi, held Cabinet rank, serving as secretary of state for religious affairs until his retirement years ago.

He is remembered for having strived to preserve a modicum of independence for the Jewish community within the rigid Communist system.

Record Of Defending Dissidents

Gregor Gysi said on West German television Sunday that he has had no close contact with his father since the age of 18.

But he said he was aware of the extraordinary privileges enjoyed by high-ranking Communist Party officials under Honecker's tenure.

According to Gysi, he and his friends used the limited channels available to criticize party corruption. He said he could be faulted only for not speaking out louder and sooner.

However, in interviews Sunday and Monday, Gysi defended the erection of the Berlin Wall 28 years ago, on the grounds it was needed at the time. He made no mention of his contacts with the Jewish community.

Gysi's reformist credentials are in good order. As early as 1978 he was defense lawyer for prominent dissidents charged with subversive activities.

The leading opposition group, New Forum, chose him to handle its application for registration as a political party and official recognition.

WEST GERMAN JUDGES, PROSECUTORS FINED FOR ABUSING TRIAL PRIVILEGES

By David Kantor

BONN, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- Three judges and two state prosecutors have given Nazi war crimes trials a bad name.

At the very least, they provided fresh ammunition to critics who say they are a waste of taxpayers' money.

The five jurists were fined between \$2,000 and \$6,000 each by a Dortmund court last week for abusing the expense privileges allowed them

for travel abroad to hear testimony from witnesses unable to come to Germany.

They were attached to a court in Bochum from 1979-1985, hearing the case of a former SS officer, Helemut Krizons, who was on trial for killing Jews in the Lodz ghetto.

The court undertook no fewer than 20 trips to hear witnesses in Israel, Poland, the United States and Australia.

But some of their stopovers turned out to have little to do with the court's business.

The judges and lawyers, for example, spent working days in Las Vegas, Mexico City, Hong Kong and at various international resorts.

They booked flights on cheap holiday tours but accepted compensation for regular business travel.

Legal sources fear these flagrant abuses will make it more difficult for the courts to take testimony abroad, which is often vital to the outcome of a case.

NEW ISRAELI OIL SPILL AVERTED AS SUNKEN TANKER IS RAISED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 11 (JTA) -- A sunken Israeli tanker was salvaged over the weekend without causing a major oil spill.

But the captain of another Israeli tanker was accused by an Israeli panel Friday of not cooperating fully with Egypt in the investigation of an oil spill in Egyptian waters two months ago.

British salvage experts, with the aid of the Cypriot salvage tug Flying Enterprise, managed to ease the 1,000-ton refueling tanker Eyal from the sea bed about a mile from Herzliya, a wealthy suburb and beach resort north of Tel Aviv.

The Eyal, which is tiny by tanker standards, was floated without spilling any of the 600 tons of oil still aboard. About 60 tons seeped out of the damaged hull when the ship grounded and sank a week earlier.

Divers sealed the hull, and compressed air was pumped in. The Eyal was raised bottom-up and then towed in that position to a repair yard in Haifa, where it was due to arrive Sunday night.

Meanwhile, Capt. Yosef Zvi of the government-owned tanker Nyuta was raked over by the former commander of the Israeli navy, Adm. Avraham Botzer, mainly for acts of omission.

Botzer was appointed by Energy Minister Moshe Shahal to head an inquiry into an alleged spill of oil from the Nyuta into the Gulf of Suez.

He faulted Zvi for failing to inform the Nyuta's operators, Tanker Services Ltd., when the vessel was first accused of spilling oil on Oct. 17.

The citation was made by the captain of a patrol boat of the Multinational Force and Observers, who informed the Egyptian authorities. The force monitors the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in Sinai and adjacent waters.

Botzer criticized Zvi for refusing to leave his ship to answer questions when he was approached by the Egyptian police in East Zeit Bay.

The Nyuta and its crew were detained for three weeks by the Egyptians. It was released last month, after President Hosni Mubarak intervened.

Capt. Zvi, freed on bail, promised to show up for trial at an Egyptian admiralty court. The trial, to have begun last week, was postponed until Jan. 2. No explanation was given.

But after learning he could face a prison sentence, Zvi said he will not return to Egypt.