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IRAQ NOT CAPABLE NOW OF LAUNCHING A POISON GAS ATTACK AGAINST ISRAEL

By David Landau and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- Apprehensions raised by the prospects of an Iraqi gas attack on Israel diminished Sunday, when the Cabinet was informed that Baghdad's military capabilities do not yet include fitting chemical warheads to its short- and medium-range missiles.

The missiles are the only delivery system to which Israel is vulnerable.

While the Iraqis showed no qualms about using poison gas in their eight-year war with Iran or against their own Kurdish minority, the gas was contained in artillery shells or dropped in bombs by the Iraqi air force.

Israel is well out of range of Iraqi artillery, and the Israeli air force is more than a match for Iraq's, Defense Minister Moshe Arens told foreign journalists Sunday in Tel Aviv.

Arens spoke after briefing the Cabinet on the Iraqi threat. He was joined by the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Gen. Dan Shomron, and the chief of military intelligence, Gen. Amnon Shahak.

They outlined various scenarios that might evolve in the current Persian Gulf crisis but stressed there was no evidence that Israel faces immediate hostilities.

At any rate, the Cabinet issued a brief statement assuring the public that the IDF is alert to any and all threats.

But Ha'aretz's respected military analyst, Ze'ev Schiff, was not entirely convinced. He pointed out Sunday that the technology required to mount chemical warheads on missiles is not especially complex.

The Cabinet was reported to have taken note of reports that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has been known to act on the basis of inaccurate information and analyses from his advisers.

Negative Impact On Tourism

While the civil defense authorities plan to distribute gas masks and anti-chemical-warfare kits to the entire population, including the Arab community, they are in no rush to do so, partly because Hussein could interpret that to mean Israel planned to attack Iraq.

The distribution will take place by the end of the year, first in the densely populated Tel Aviv area and then in the Galilee town of Safed.

The authorities have asked manufacturers and dealers meanwhile not to sell masks to the public now, to avoid hoarding and profiteering.

The gas masks retail for \$150 to \$300, including kits that contain a disposable syringe with atropine, a poison gas antidote.

The gas scare seems to have had a depressing effect on tourism to Israel, at least in the short term.

The Jerusalem Hotel Association reported a sharp increase of cancellations Sunday, mainly by tourists booked for the weeks immediately ahead.

But the hoteliers believe it is too early to discern a trend. They say time alone will tell whether the Persian Gulf crisis and Iraqi missile threats against Israel will have serious consequences for tourism.

PALESTINIANS IN THE TERRITORIES RALLY BEHIND IRAQ'S SADDAM HUSSEIN

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, ostracized by the Western powers and most of the Arab world, has gained the fervent support of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Thousands of them took to the streets Sunday waving Iraqi and Palestinian flags in demonstrations for the Iraqi leader and against the Western nations arrayed against him with backing from most Arab League states.

Although Hussein is hardly known as a devout Moslem and in fact heads the secular leftist Ba'ath party, his exhortations to an Islamic holy war against the Western allies and Israel have elicited a powerful response from the Palestinians.

Sheikh Sa'ad a-Din al-Alami, chairman of the Supreme Moslem Council in Jerusalem, was one of many religious leaders who sent cables of support to the Iraqi president.

"From Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem, on behalf of the Moslem world, we strengthen your hands and call on you to get rid of the American army and its allies which are deployed on Saudi soil," the cable read.

"We hope that you will act to purify the places sacred to Islam in Mecca and Medina from the foreign invaders," Alami added.

In Gaza, 200 Arab youths burned tires and chanted pro-Iraqi slogans. "With spirit and with blood we shall redeem Saddam," they shouted.

Slogans denouncing the "crusading aggression" of the Western powers were painted on walls.

Israeli Arabs Back Hussein, Too

There were similar demonstrations in the West Bank, mainly in Tulkarm and the Nablus casbah. In both places, marchers carried large portraits of Hussein and Yasir Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Leaflets urging Arab leaders to support Hussein were distributed in the two towns. One leaflet noted that "Iraq's leader has shown consistency in his solid support for the Palestinians, both materially and financially."

Baghdad has in fact served as a center for many PLO institutions, and Hussein has emerged recently as one of the strongest supporters of the Palestinians. The PLO's backing of him therefore came as no surprise to Israelis.

The East Jerusalem weekly A-Nadwa reported over the weekend that 60 percent of Israeli's Arab citizens also support the Iraqi leader.

Palestinian demonstrators in the territories explained that they consider him the new strongman of the Middle East who might upset the strategic balance in the region in favor of the Arabs against Israel. They fear if Hussein fails, it will mean another setback for the Palestinian cause.

So far only one Palestinian leader has publicly warned that Hussein's aggression could backfire. Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem pointed out a week ago that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait diverted attention and sympathy from the Palestinians and focused instead on oil.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

LAWMAKERS SAY IRAQI INVASION IS GAIN FOR ISRAEL AND SAUDIS ALIKE

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- Iraq's invasion of Kuwait may bolster support for Israel on Capitol Hill, but lawmakers say the Bush administration could also become more favorably disposed toward Saudi Arabia, at Israel's expense.

Members of Congress, in interviews last week, said the Iraqi aggression strengthens the rationale for selling sophisticated U.S. arms to Saudi Arabia -- so long as the kingdom continues to allow the United States to help defend it.

For Israel's image here, Iraq's invasion is "enormously helpful," said Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.). "This really drives home the essential reasonableness of Israel's posture," he said.

"Israel is in fact besieged by evil people" who "wish them great harm," Frank said.

But he warned that while the Iraqi invasion puts Israel's refusal to accept U.S. proposals for direct negotiations with Palestinians "in a better context, it doesn't make Israel immune from criticism and shouldn't."

Rep. Mel Levine (D-Calif.) said Israel will benefit because many colleagues have told him they now see "Arab-upon-Arab aggression" as a major Middle East problem that has "nothing to do with Israel."

He predicted the crisis would put to rest some of the "Israeli-oriented excuses" that blame the Jewish state as the principal reason for there being no peace in the region.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) said the Iraqi move would also improve the U.S. image of Syria, which had been regarded by many as Israel's chief foe. The fact that Iraq and Syria are enemies "might enhance opportunities with Israel and Syria," he said.

Praise For Syria

Specter took the occasion to praise Syria for earlier this year saying it would attend an international peace conference on the Middle East under U.S.-Soviet auspices.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), however, said he objects to creating a "good guys" image of Syria. Though he noted Syria's help earlier this year in arranging the release of some Western hostages in Lebanon, D'Amato warned against being "lulled" into thinking Syria has become a more moderate country.

"Any enemy of my enemy is not my friend," the senator said, disputing the old adage about alliances in the Middle East.

Levine took a stab at Jordan, which has refused to join the chorus of Arab criticism of the Iraqi invasion. He said the United States should no longer consider it a "moderate Arab country."

Jordan's policies have been "sadly wanting over the last several months" and its recent behavior is "not within the definition of moderate," Levine said.

Of particular concern to pro-Israel lawmakers would likely be any administration move to frame its Middle East policy as "Israel versus oil."

Any U.S. move toward placing greater emphasis on oil at Israel's expense, Levine said, would be "every bit as intolerable as any movement toward Saudi Arabia will be."

"Israel's unquestionable friendship contrasts

so sharply with what we see throughout that region," he said.

But D'Amato and Specter suggested that a more likely scenario than any U.S. policy change is that Saudi Arabia and Israel may move closer together, because, as D'Amato said, they both realize they "are open to attack" from Iraq.

"The Saudis recognize it as a long term advantage to have an Israel that is strong to deal with the radicals, who have no love for them," D'Amato argued.

"I think that with Iraq's action there would be a response by the rest of the Arab world to come closer to the United States and perhaps inferentially to Israel," Specter said, "but it's hard to predict what the Arab nations will do next."

Saudis Promised Advanced Arms

On the arms front, Frank said the invasion will have "mixed" implications for future U.S. sales to Arab countries. It "probably strengthens the Saudis," he said.

But it creates a new burden on Kuwait's fellow smaller Arab states trying to defend the wisdom of U.S. sales, that "you better be careful, because weapons you sell to regime X may end up next week in the hands of regime X minus," Frank said.

Levine said he has been told that, as a concession to Saudi Arabia for allowing U.S. forces to be stationed there, the administration has agreed to send Congress a request next year to sell top-of-the-line fighter planes to Saudi Arabia, presumably F-15s or F-16s.

Such planes, which have the capability of reaching Israel, are among the few items in the tens of billions of dollars in prior U.S. proposed sales to the kingdom that pro-Israel lawmakers have attempted to block.

Levine refused to spell out under what condition he would support future sales to Saudi Arabia, short of having U.S. troops in the kingdom. He said the kingdom needs to agree on the need to "rely on combined forces," but declined to call for a mutual defense treaty.

D'Amato predicted that Congress will support sales to the Saudis of a range of weapons systems, "given their land mass," which makes swift capture by Iraq unlikely as took place in Kuwait.

He called on the United States to work toward a "mutual security" pact with Gulf states or an agreement that "the whole world will come to the defense of those countries."

Dole Backs Away From Aid Cut

While not seeing any long-term diminution in administration pressure on Israel regarding the peace process, the lawmakers said there will be stronger support for not cutting the \$3 billion in annual U.S. aid to Israel, which is coming under various budget-cutting pressures.

One such signal was sent by Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), who last week backed off halfway from his proposal to cut foreign aid to the top U.S. recipients by 5 percent across the board.

Dole, speaking to reporters in the U.S. Capitol Building, said it "wouldn't be a time to reduce military aid to either Egypt or Israel."

"But foreign aid, like every other spending program on the economic side, has to be looked at," he added.

Levine welcomed Dole's statement: "It's better late than never, and hopefully he'll turn around on the rest of it."

CONCERNED ABOUT APPEARING ANTI-ARAB, EUROPEANS CONSIDER GESTURE TO JORDAN

By Yossi Lempkowitz

BRUSSELS, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- A flurry of diplomatic activity by the European Community is expected to follow an extraordinary meeting of the 12 E.C. foreign ministers that took place here Friday to discuss the Persian Gulf crisis.

While they reaffirmed their unreserved condemnation of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the European ministers made clear they want to avoid at all costs the impression they are launching an "anti-Arab" crusade.

There was talk of a "gesture" to King Hussein of Jordan, possibly in the form of economic aid, since the Hashemite monarch is especially vulnerable to Iraqi pressure.

Three E.C. foreign ministers will in fact visit Jordan and Egypt in the next week to discuss the Persian Gulf situation.

They might also confer with officials of the Arab League and of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, which consists of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The trip was announced by Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis of Italy, current chairman of the E.C. Council of Ministers.

He will be accompanied by the foreign ministers of Ireland and Luxembourg, who are respectively the immediate past chairman and the next chairman of the Council of Ministers.

The office is rotated every six months and the incumbent and his successor and predecessor constitute the E.C.'s so-called "troika" dealing exclusively with Middle East problems.

The suggestion of a "specific gesture" toward Jordan was raised by the West German foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher. He noted that King Hussein, who is not related to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, "is in a difficult position"

Concern About Losing Arab Confidence

Genscher thought economic aid would be helpful, because Jordan, which is not an oil producer, is heavily dependent on financial assistance from the Gulf states and had maintained especially close relations with Iraq.

"The 12 E.C. countries agreed to avoid transforming European firmness (against Iraqi aggression) into a new anti-Arab crusade," an E.C. official said.

"We must avoid losing the Arab world's confidence," stressed Foreign Minister De Michelis.

"We must take into account three factors: Arab nationalism, economic and social difficulties, and fundamentalism."

The foreign ministers' meeting issued a statement saying they decided "to maintain close contact with the Arab governments and to offer their assistance to Arab efforts aimed at defusing tensions and restoring international legality within the framework of United Nations Security Council resolutions."

The meeting of E.C. foreign ministers coincided with the Arab League summit meeting Friday in Cairo, where a majority of the member states agreed to support Western measures against Iraq.

Egypt and Morocco are sending token military forces to Saudi Arabia, where the United States is massing sea, air and ground forces to protect the Saudi kingdom.

LAUNCH ATTACK AGAINST IRAQ NOW, SHARON ADVISES THE UNITED STATES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- Ariel Sharon has urged the United States to launch an immediate military strike to dislodge Iraq from Kuwait, instead of waiting for the long-term effects of an embargo on Iraqi oil.

If military action is contemplated at all, strike now to force Iraq out of Kuwait, the former Israeli defense minister advised in a weekend radio interview. He gave his reasons:

"Soon we shall see pictures on television of hungry babies and children in Iraq. In the United States, the demand will grow to bring the boys home. The hostage problem will intensify, and America's allies will grow tired of sitting in the desert," Sharon said.

The former Israel Defense Force general and Yom Kippur War hero criticized Washington for not establishing a military presence in Kuwait in response to Saddam Hussein's threats before he invaded. If only a few U.S. troops were there, Hussein would not have invaded, he contended.

But now Iraq is entrenched in Kuwait, and the longer it stays, the more the world will get used to the idea that Kuwait is part of Iraq and the harder it will be to get the Iraqis out, said Sharon, who is now Israel's housing minister.

He predicted that if Hussein is not ousted from Kuwait, he will be tempted to further acts of aggression, including an attack on Israel.

But Sharon does not consider that a real threat at the moment, "because Iraq knows full well that Israel has a deterrent response."

Sharon predicted Hussein would not attempt to attack Saudi Arabia either at this time.

CABINET APPROVES ZALMAN SHUVAL AS NEW ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO U.S.

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- Israel's Cabinet on Sunday approved Zalman Shuval, a Likud member of Knesset, to be Israel's next ambassador to Washington.

Shuval, a member of the Ometz faction of the Likud bloc, was named to succeed Moshe Arad, who has been ambassador to the United States for exactly three years.

His appointment fulfills the accord struck in June between Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the Likud leader, and Shuval's Ometz faction, which requested the prestigious position in exchange for joining the Likud coalition government.

An official announcement will come after the U.S. government formally accepts Shuval, an accepted diplomatic practice.

Shuval, who is 60 and a banker by profession, said Sunday that he thought Israel's public relations task in the United States had been made easier by the crisis in the Persian Gulf.

The fray, he said, has pointed out the existence of critical flash points in the Middle East other than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Because of his assignment, Shuval must resign his seat in the Knesset. The Ometz party, which comprises only two members of Knesset, Shuval and Yigael Hurvitz, will now be reduced to only Hurvitz.

Shuval will be succeeded in his seat by former Likud member of Knesset Haim Kaufman of the Herut faction, whose name is next on the Likud list.

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION A FACTOR IN GROUPS BACKING CIVIL RIGHTS BILL By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- President Bush is threatening to veto a landmark civil rights bill that some Jewish groups are backing to help victims of employment discrimination win legal relief.

Bush opposes both the House of Representatives version of the Civil Rights Act of 1990, which was approved 272-154 on Aug. 3, and a strikingly similar Senate version approved last month.

The president warned before the House voted that attempts to modify the House bill, sponsored by Rep. Augustus Hawkins (D-Calif.), "would not result in a bill I can sign."

The congressional bills reverse or modify five 1989 Supreme Court decisions on the application of laws prohibiting job discrimination.

In addition, they would extend for the first time the possibility of compensatory and punitive damages to those discriminated against because of their sex, religion or national origin.

Bush wrote House Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-Ill.) that he is "convinced" the Hawkins bill "will have the effect of forcing businesses to adopt quotas in hiring and promotion."

Most Jewish groups, with the exception of Agudath Israel of America, believe language that makes it easier to challenge employment practices will not result in hiring or promotion quotas.

Agudath Israel opposed the bill because it believes it will lead employers to impose quotas, which have long been inimical to Jews. Before World War II, many Jews here were denied employment or promotions because of such quotas.

Despite benefits Jews might receive, the primary reason why Jewish groups supported the bill is their secular commitment to civil rights, evidenced by their membership in the 185-member Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

Substitute Bill Rejected

Bush had urged the House to adopt a substitute civil rights bill, sponsored by Rep. John LaFalce (D-N.Y.), which resorts to a different test for an employer to prove a hiring or promotion practice was "required by business necessity."

As adopted, the House and Senate bills define business necessity as bearing "a significant relationship to successful performance of the job," language taken from the 1971 high court decision in Griggs vs. Duke Power. That decision, eroded by 1989 court rulings, placed the burden of proof on the employer.

AJCommittee, in a letter this spring to Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who sponsored the Senate bill, argued that "before the court reversed its position last June, the Griggs precedent stood for nearly 20 years, without resulting in racially based numerical quota systems."

AJCommittee and other Jewish groups opposed LaFalce's definition of business necessity requiring the employer to prove the discrimination "has a manifest relationship to the employment in question or that the (employer's) legitimate employment goals are significantly served" by the practice challenged.

Judith Golub, AJCommittee's legislative director, said the "manifest relationship" phrase was made moot by including the legitimate employment goals phrase from a 1989 court ruling.

Golub said that language would have "codi-

fied" the court's ruling in that case, which placed the burden on the employee to disprove the business necessity for the practice.

The House defeated the LaFalce measure 238-188. Only three of the five Jewish House Republicans voted for it: Reps. Willis Gradison Jr. (R-Ohio), John Miller (R-Wash.) and Steven Schiff (R-N.M.). They also opposed the Hawkins bill.

Two moderate Jewish New York Republicans, Reps. Benjamin Gilman and Bill Green, opposed the LaFalce bill, as did all 26 Jewish Democratic House members.

Cap On Punitive Damages

The Senate on July 18 approved the Kennedy bill 65-24. Unlike the House, the Senate did not vote on a compromise measure. It was withdrawn by its sponsor, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.).

The key difference between the House and Senate version is that the House, to placate some opponents of the Hawkins bill, set a cap of \$150,000 for punitive damages.

Golub of AJCommittee said her group does not support the cap "because we think it's inequitable. There's something offensive about a cap." But she said it was one of the compromises that had to be reached to gain passage of the bill.

Bush said the cap amendment does "nothing to cure the bill's defects."

While opponents of the Hawkins bill were invoking Bush's name to urge its defeat, supporters such as House Speaker Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) reminded colleagues that it was 25 years ago Aug. 6 that President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Foley, who gave the final speech during the two-hour debate, received a standing ovation from the bill's supporters when he concluded, "Twenty-five years from now, we will look back on this date with pride and satisfaction."

But Rep. Mickey Edwards (R-Okla.) called the measure a "lawyers' get-rich bill," and argued that if a local work force is 35 percent black, no more blacks would be hired, because then an employer "won't have enough Asians."

On another discrimination front, the Senate Judiciary Committee has approved a non-binding resolution that calls it "inappropriate" for federal judicial nominees and Justice Department appointees to be members of discriminatory private clubs.

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith hailed the measure.

OLD SOVIET MAP LEADS TO CONFUSION By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 12 (JTA) -- A recently arrived family of immigrants from the Soviet Union refused to accept an apartment in Acre, a city on Haifa Bay, because they were convinced it was outside Israel's borders, Ma'ariv reported.

The family, from Donetsk, in the Ukraine, got their information from a 1947 atlas published by the Soviet government survey department. The map of Palestine showed it as it was partitioned by the United Nations into Jewish and Arab states on Nov. 29, 1947.

The partition was never implemented because Israel's Arab neighbors attacked the Jewish state the day after it was founded on May 14, 1948.

Had it been, not only Acre but Nazareth, Nahariya and many other Israeli cities would have been outside its boundaries. The 43-year-old Soviet atlas identifies Tel Aviv as Israel's capital.