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**BAKER'S DECISION TO VISIT SYRIA
IS NO SURPRISE TO ISRAELI OFFICIAL**

By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's announcement Monday that he would visit Syria later this week came as no surprise to Israel.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy told Jewish leaders here Monday that he had been given advance notice of the visit, the first by a U.S. secretary of state since 1988, during his meeting in Washington last week with Baker.

Levy said he had been assured by Baker that there would be no deals made "behind Israel's back or at Israel's expense" during the secretary's visit, which Baker announced at a news conference in Brussels.

The visit is being viewed as a sign of improving relations between Washington and Damascus, which have been strained for years over Syria's support of radical Palestinian groups.

But it is also being seen as a further attempt to isolate Iraq from the rest of the Arab world. Syria has contributed troops to the multinational front against Iraq, and the Baker visit will give the Bush administration an opportunity to express its appreciation.

When Baker told Levy he was going to Damascus, the Israeli foreign minister suggested the secretary make a stop in Jerusalem, too, sometime in the near future.

Baker reportedly agreed. "He will come, I have no doubt," Levy told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations at a meeting wrapping up his visit to the United States.

While Levy's meetings with Bush administration officials were described as friendly, they appear to have done little to narrow the gap between Israel and the United States on the proper approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, despite the two nations' newest common enemy: Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Rejects International Conference

But this gap did not seem to faze Levy, who told the Jewish leaders his trip was not intended to point up differences between the two nations. "To pick a fight, you don't need to come all the way from Jerusalem to Washington," he said.

Levy seemed confident that the United States, like Israel, rejects any comparison between Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said the United States does not envision any linkage between resolution of the two issues.

The only victor of such a linkage, Levy said, would be Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat, who has shown support for Iraq in its confrontation with the United States.

"For aiding and abetting the enemies of today, he (Arafat) should not come out with a reward in his hand," Levy said.

The foreign minister stressed repeatedly to the audience of American Jewish leaders that negotiating with Arab states, rather than the Palestinians, is his idea of the answer to a lasting Middle East peace.

"It's wrong for anyone to think that the

Palestinian problem is the central point" of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Levy said.

The foreign minister sharply rejected the suggestion of an international peace conference, an idea revived in the last week by Soviet officials. Pointing out that the United States has opposed such a conference, Levy said the idea was, like the title of the famous movie, "gone with the wind."

"Israel is not going to be arraigned before some international tribunal," he declared. "We will stand on our elemental right to have direct negotiations."

Progress With The Soviets Possible

Despite the disagreement on an international conference, Levy hinted at possible future progress in Soviet-Israeli relations. He said that an Israeli Foreign Ministry delegation would soon visit Moscow, so that during his upcoming meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze at the U.N. General Assembly, "we can resolve certain matters."

At that meeting, "I hope there will be a breakthrough," Levy said, though he did not say whether he thought the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two countries was imminent.

At the Conference of Presidents, Levy managed to create a positive rapport with the Diaspora leaders, despite the fact that he spoke through a translator. American Jewish leaders attending the speech described him as "frank" and "warm."

The establishment of good feelings also was Levy's most tangible accomplishment in his meetings with Baker and Bush. But left unclear was when the United States would issue guarantees for \$400 million in loans to help Israel build housing for Soviet immigrants.

At a news conference here with Israeli reporters last Friday, Levy expressed optimism that progress would soon be made on the long-awaited housing loan guarantees, which were approved by Congress this spring.

"There is phrasing we agreed to crystallize in the coming days. I think we'll complete it soon," he said.

During Levy's current stay in New York, he paid a visit Sunday to the Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson. He met Monday with New York Mayor David Dinkins.

**FORCE SHOULD BE USED AGAINST IRAQ
ONLY AS A LAST RESORT, SAYS RABIN**
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- The United States and other countries opposed to Iraq's annexation of Kuwait should use force only as a "last resort," former Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Sunday.

Instead, there should be a political solution without concessions to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Rabin said here at an American Jewish Congress symposium on the Persian Gulf crisis.

"Any attempt to please Saddam Hussein, to give something for agreeing to withdraw from Kuwait will be detrimental to stability in the region. It will give encouragement to more vio-

lence, aggression and the emergence of leaders like Saddam Hussein," he argued.

Rabin expressed concern even with humanitarian shipments of food or medicine to Iraq, which he said would allow that country to persevere for "far beyond" the beginning of 1991.

Iraq already has enough arms and spare parts to last a long time, he added.

Rabin, whose Labor Party now leads the parliamentary opposition in Israel, said the Gulf crisis has yet to reach its most critical point, but he did not say what that would be.

The focus is now on having Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev attempt to persuade Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait, Rabin said, referring to Sunday's superpower meeting in Helsinki, Finland.

How the crisis is resolved will decide "the rules of the game on the international scene of the world in the post-Cold War period," he predicted.

At the Helsinki meeting, President Bush gave Gorbachev time to work politically to seek an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, Rabin said.

Should Gorbachev succeed, "I don't know what will be the price of the delivery," he said.

Calls For Soviet Involvement

But Rabin said he felt reassured by Bush's statement Sunday that the United States opposes linking resolution of the Iraqi conflict with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Rabin said the Soviets should from now on be involved in discussions on resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, but not as a participant in an international peace conference, as Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze reiterated recently.

Rather, the United States should consult with the Soviets in its efforts to bring about direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Rabin blamed the advent of Iraq's military power not only on years of Soviet armament, but on U.S. support of Iraq in the decade-long war between Iran and Iraq.

He said the United States had the right idea when it shipped TOW missiles and other weaponry to Iran during the Iran-Contra affair.

Rabin argued that no substantive discussions should occur on the Arab-Israeli peace process until the Iraqi crisis is resolved. But he said when the diplomatic process resumes, there should not be a push for an international peace conference on the Middle East or even a meeting between Israel and the various Arab countries technically in a state of war with the Jewish state.

One of the problems in lumping all the Arab countries together is that Iraq would use its leverage over Jordan to sabotage such a negotiating process, he said.

But Rabin said he views Syria "totally differently" as a result of its support of the economic sanctions and blockade against Iraq. He said he opposes any U.S. aid to Syria, but would support U.S. efforts to bolster Syria politically.

On another subject, Rabin dismissed as "total nonsense" the argument that continuation of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will at some point pose a threat "to the very existence of Israel."

That statement appeared to partially contradict one made earlier by Henry Siegman, AJCongress executive vice president, who argued that problems posed by the territories are at least more threatening, if not "infinitely more threatening" to Israel's security than "perpetuation of the status quo."

PALESTINIANS CONFIDENT IRAQI POWER WILL FURTHER THEIR NATIONAL GOALS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- A spokesman for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip expressed confidence Monday that the rise of Iraqi power would further Palestinian national goals.

At the same time, Annan Sherif, an executive member of the Federation of Trade Unions in the administered territories, called on the United Nations to protect the rights of Palestinians living in the Persian Gulf states.

Sherif held a news conference in East Jerusalem, where he and other speakers charged that more than 55,000 Palestinian families have been expelled from Saudi Arabia because Palestinians support President Saddam Hussein of Iraq in his confrontation with the Western powers.

Sherif said this was the third mass expulsion suffered by the Palestinians, the first two having been at the hands of Israel in 1948 and 1967.

According to the speakers, the Saudis gave some families no more than 48 hours to leave.

They did not know how many of the families have since returned to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where economic conditions have deteriorated because the remittance of money from the Gulf states has ended.

But according to Sherif, the bright side of the situation is that the Palestinians are more united than ever in the past and are encouraged by Iraq's ascendancy.

ONE IDF SOLDIER KILLED BY MINE WHILE AIDING SHEPHERD IN GOLAN

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- An Israel Defense Force soldier was killed and an officer was slightly wounded Sunday when their jeep struck a mine in the Golan Heights as they were rushing to aid a severely injured Druse shepherd.

The dead soldier, 1st Sgt. Avshalom Mahfud of Petach Tikva, was buried in his hometown Monday. The 38-year-old reservist was the father of four children.

The shepherd, Salah Tabarich, 54, of Buk'ata village, died of wounds he sustained from a mine explosion after he reportedly pulled down about 20 feet of wire fence surrounding the minefield to open a grazing area for his flock of goats.

The IDF soldiers had been driving nearby and responded to the noise of the blast. Their jeep, speeding through the gap in the fence, set off another mine.

The officer, identified only as a reserve lieutenant colonel in the Engineers Corps, was reprimanded and suspended by Gen. Yossi Peled, commander of the northern sector, for failing to observe standing orders on the identification and marking of minefields.

NO CASUALTIES FROM BOMB IN TEL AVIV

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- A pipe bomb exploded near the Tel Aviv central bus terminal Monday morning, causing no casualties and only minor damage to a parked car.

The explosion took place while the area was crowded with pedestrians. The device was concealed under bushes on Hasharon Street, where the bus station and Merkaz Cinema are located.

ISRAELI OFFICIALS START CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT MOSSAD BOOK AUTHOR

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- A campaign to discredit the author of a book exposing alleged activities of the Israeli foreign intelligence agency Mossad seemed to be taking shape here over the weekend, after the Israeli Embassy in Ottawa got a court order temporarily blocking the book's publication in Canada.

While officials confirmed that the author, Canadian-born Victor Ostrovski, had been employed by Mossad during the mid-1980s, they said he had been found "unfit for the service" and that he returned to Canada after 18 months as a trainee.

The officials said Israel seeks to bar publication of the book because the author wrote it in contravention of the official secrets oath which he took when he became associated with Mossad.

They refused to comment on the allegations contained in the book but insisted their truth or falsity was not the issue.

The Canadian ban was handed down on grounds that Ostrovski, who holds dual Canadian and Israeli citizenship, violated the secrecy clause of the contract he signed with Mossad.

The book is titled "By Way of Deception: A Devastating Insider's Portrait of Mossad." Ostrovski wrote it along with Canadian journalist Claire Hoy. Publication was scheduled for October by Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd. of Toronto.

Israelis who claim to have worked with him in civil life described Ostrovski as an erratic personality with a vivid imagination.

They said he ran afoul of the law because of bad debts and his alleged involvement in the forging of credit cards.

May Have Had Personal Vendetta

Isser Harel, a former chief of Mossad and of the internal security service Shin Bet, contended in an interview Sunday that Ostrovski was motivated by greed and a personal vendetta when he wrote his book.

Harel is himself the author of dozens of books based on his Mossad experiences, including "The House on Garibaldi Street," an account of the kidnapping of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann by Israeli agents in Buenos Aires in 1960.

But according to Harel, all of his published works were first reviewed by a special Cabinet committee and passed by the military censor before publication.

The spotlight focused on Ostrovski, who also claims to have been an officer in the Israeli navy, when the author held a news conference in Toronto last week at which he expressed fear for his life. He said Mossad agents had visited him and threatened him with "the fate of Mordechai Vanunu."

Vanunu, a former technician at Israel's Dimona nuclear facility, was allegedly kidnapped by Israeli agents in Rome in 1986 after giving information to a British newspaper about Israel's supposed nuclear weapons capabilities. He is now serving a life sentence in solitary confinement.

Ostrovski has gone into hiding.

His 300-page book alleges, among other things, that Mossad deliberately withheld advance information it had of the Shi'ite suicide truck bomb attack that killed nearly 300 U.S. Marines deployed at Beirut airport in 1983. The purpose, Ostrovski said, was to harm U.S.-Arab relations.

KNESSET PANEL WEIGHS IMMUNITY OF MEMBER SUSPECTED OF PLO TIES

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- The Knesset House Committee began deliberations Monday over whether to lift the parliamentary immunity of Arab Knesset member Mohammed Miari, whom Attorney General Yosef Harish wants to prosecute for alleged collaboration with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Miari is leader of the far-left Progressive List for Peace and occupies its single Knesset seat.

While the faction openly identifies with the PLO and Miari has had numerous contacts with PLO officials in contravention of the law, the state did not "bother him," Harish explained, because he claimed he was "discussing peace with them."

Now, however, the attorney general charges that Miari acted in collusion with the PLO in planning to sail a shipload of Palestinian deportees to an Israeli port in November 1988.

The plan was aborted when the ferry the PLO had chartered for the purpose was disabled by an underwater explosion at the Cypriot port of Limassol.

Agents of Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service, were widely believed responsible for the sabotage.

Harish is urging that Miari be stripped of his immunity because his alleged involvement with the PLO in the scheme "does not conform with the behavior expected from a member of the Knesset."

Miari, who was off to Geneva on Monday for an international conference attended by PLO representatives, rejected Harish's arguments. In a statement before his departure, he said he would be proud to go to jail.

He insisted, however, that as a member of Knesset he has every right to oppose actions taken by the state, even if that requires him to violate the law.

"The law itself gives a Knesset member the immunity to act to promote his mission and his political belief," Miari said.

SHEKEL REDUCED BY 2.82 PERCENT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- The shekel was reduced by 2.82 percent Monday in its second devaluation since Aug. 29.

The Bank of Israel set the new rate of exchange at 2.08 shekels to the dollar, up from 2.032 shekels last Friday.

The pending move was announced Sunday night by Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i and Michael Bruno, governor of the Bank of Israel, the country's central bank.

They had not said what the exact rate of exchange would be, but a 1.5 percent devaluation had been expected.

The actual reduction of nearly 3 percent was triggered by a \$27 million spurt in demand for foreign currency which the Bank of Israel made no effort to meet, unlike recent practice.

Under existing regulations, the central bank can adjust the value of the shekel daily without Treasury approval, as long as the adjustments range no more than 5 percent above or below the "mean representative rate" of the shekel against a basket of foreign currencies.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**NJCRCAC PLAN GIVES BLUEPRINT ON ISSUES FROM REUNIFICATION TO ABORTION RIGHTS**
By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Sept. 10 (JTA) -- Want to know what the American Jewish community thinks on issues ranging from German reunification to reproductive choice?

The answers can probably be found in this year's edition of one of the lesser-known but highly useful tools for reading the political mind of the American Jewish community: the Joint Program Plan of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

The positions outlined in the 1990-91 Joint Program Plan, which was released last Friday, have evolved throughout the year in a series of meetings of Jewish community relations professionals and lay leaders, which climaxes each February in the annual NJCRCAC plenum.

At the plenum, held in Phoenix this year, representatives of the 13 national Jewish agencies and 117 local community relations councils that belong to NJCRCAC debate, argue and eventually hammer out as close to a consensus position as it is possible to achieve in the Jewish community.

The organization's leaders say that what emerges from each year's laborious process of debate and compromise is an accurate picture of where the American Jewish community stands on domestic and overseas issues, which can be used as a guide for those in the Jewish community relations field.

"Polls have indicated that the positions outlined in the Joint Program Plan are reflective of the U.S. Jewish community," Lawrence Rubin, executive vice chair of NJCRCAC, said at a news conference releasing the 1990-91 Joint Program Plan.

Foray Into Israeli Domestic Politics

New issues tackled in this year's edition include German reunification and the issue of democracy and pluralism in the State of Israel. In addition, NJCRCAC's traditional positions on church-state issues, reproductive rights, civil rights and outlook on world Jewry are summarized and updated.

The Democracy and Pluralism in Israel section was one of the more "controversial" in the plan, said Arden Shenker, chairman of NJCRCAC's executive committee.

The section recommends that the Jewish community relations field support "efforts to codify basic human rights principles in Israel" and "Israeli government programs and initiatives by private organizations that promote democracy and pluralism" in Israel.

Rubin and Shenker said that the inclusion of the Democracy and Pluralism section marks the first time NJCRCAC has entered the realm of what many would consider internal Israeli affairs, something the American Jewish community has often been reluctant to do publicly.

But Rubin argued that "the health of Israel's democracy is of concern to the American Jewish community."

The section was one of several in which the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, a NJCRCAC member, dissented from the official NJCRCAC position.

"We have long believed that public debate among North American Jews on questions of Israeli foreign policy, domestic political structure

and religious integrity are divisive both to our own community and the people of the sovereign State of Israel," the Orthodox Union wrote in its dissent in the Program Plan.

The Orthodox group also differed from NJCRCAC positions on a number of church-state issues and on the umbrella organization's commitment to fight for a woman's right to an abortion.

O.U. objections to an activist pro-choice stance have prevented NJCRCAC from filing Supreme Court briefs, since member agencies have veto power over any action taken in NJCRCAC's name.

In such cases, NJCRCAC will still act as a coordinator for those agencies who are participating in the pro-choice fight, with each agency participating in its own name, instead of under the NJCRCAC rubric.

Strict Church-State Division

On church-state issues, NJCRCAC upheld the historic Jewish stand in favor of strict division between church and state, including opposing the display of Chanukah menorahs and Christmas trees on public property, and opposing any assistance from the federal government to religious schools.

Though some Jews have argued that menorahs are a positive assertion of Jewish identity and that Jewish schools could use the federal dollars, "the price is too high to pay" in terms of the separation of church and state, Shenker said.

The most vociferous dissent on this came again from the O.U., which called "for a reassessment of the traditional NJCRCAC position on this issue. We accordingly welcome the call for substantive dialogue on issues such as tax tuition credits and religious holiday displays."

NJCRCAC's leaders are well aware that trends in U.S. federal courts are going against American Jewry's relatively liberal domestic agenda.

The Joint Program Plan points out that "the changing composition of the Supreme Court requires continued scrutiny, especially in light of concerns about threats to the Bill of Rights."

For the first time, NJCRCAC grappled with the issue of German reunification in this year's Joint Program Plan. In a special statement adopted by the group's executive committee, there is a call for the memory of the Holocaust to be "institutionalized" in the newly reunified German nation.

A German Holiday Of Remembrance

NJCRCAC urged the new Germany to make the date of Kristallnacht a holiday of remembrance, educate their people about the history of the Holocaust, maintain a special relationship with Israel and strictly monitor the development of anti-Semitic or neo-Nazi hate groups.

"The Jewish community relations field seeks assurances from the Federal Republic of Germany that the social contract that will constitute the new, more powerful Germany will acknowledge Germany's acceptance of responsibility for the Holocaust," the statement said.

The cause of memorializing the Holocaust in Germany suffered a setback this month when leaders of the two German states signed a unification treaty that made no reference to the Nazi era. Unification of East and West Germany is set for Oct. 3.

Rubin said NJCRCAC is developing plans to meet with German officials to press its concerns on this issue.