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**ISRAELI ARMY ON HIGHEST ALERT
WITH BELIEF WAR IS INEVITABLE**

By Hugh Orgel and David Landau

TEL AVIV, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force, reportedly acting on intelligence estimates that war in the Persian Gulf is now inevitable, is on the highest level of preparedness short of combat.

Israel's possible participation or involvement in a war with Iraq remains uncertain. Israel is not part of the U.S.-led coalition committed to force Iraq from Kuwait.

But the Jewish state has come under repeated threats from Saddam Hussein, echoed only last week by Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, that it will be the first target of Iraqi missiles if Baghdad is attacked by American forces and their allies.

The IDF says it is ready for any eventuality. The air force was put on maximum alert in preparation for the expiration of the U.N. deadline for an Iraqi pullout from Kuwait, which is at 7 a.m. Israel time Wednesday.

New, sophisticated weapons that arrived in Israel recently have been integrated into the armed forces.

There seems little likelihood at the present juncture that Israel will be involved in a land war employing infantry, artillery and armor, unless Iraqi ground forces decide to plunge across Jordan, which separates the Israeli and Iraqi borders by 300 miles.

Military sources reported the Jordanian army is making no attempt to conceal what seem to be defensive measures near the Jordan River border with Israel.

The Allenby Bridge, the main crossing between Jordan and Israel, was reported jammed with Palestinians returning to the West Bank and Gaza Strip after being evacuated from Iraq and Kuwait.

Many were quoted as saying Israel and the administered territories seemed safer than Jordan under the present circumstances.

Prayers For Peace And Mercy

While Israel has agreed not to launch a pre-emptive attack on Iraq, there is no certainty the Iraqis will not strike pre-emptively at Israel.

Hospitals and clinics have completed preparations to handle civilian casualties and other emergencies.

A full-dress drill was conducted Monday at Ichilov Hospital, one of Tel Aviv's largest medical facilities. It involved the reception and treatment of poison gas victims, including decontamination and polaroid photography of the victims to facilitate identification by relatives.

The Health Ministry assured the public Monday that emergency stocks of medicine are on hand. People were urged not to overstock on pharmaceuticals.

Schools have prepared their air raid shelters and sealed off about a third of their classrooms against gas attacks.

The schools will remain open until a general emergency is declared, at which time people will be required to carry their gas masks at all times.

Air raid shelters which remain locked to prevent misuse in normal times have been opened.

Israeli radio and television have prepared to pre-empt regular broadcasts to relay a constant flow of instructions and information to the public in case of emergency.

In Jerusalem, an estimated 20,000 Orthodox Jews, convinced that prayer can avert evil, massed at the Western Wall on Monday reciting psalms and slichot prayers of repentance to prevent war.

The special prayer session was organized by the Chief Rabbinate and the Agudat Yisrael party's Council of Sages.

The Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Israel, Avraham Shapira, was present with Yitzhak Kolitz and Yisrael Lau, the chief rabbis of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, respectively.

They were joined by the Hasidic rebbe of Belz, Yissachar Dov Rokeach, and Moshe Yehoshua Hager, the Hasidic rebbe of Vishnitz, who is chairman of the Chief Rabbinate Council.

Many of the worshippers were fasting. Tears flowed copiously as the cantor recited psalms traditionally said during times of tribulation.

They ended with the Avinu Malkeinu prayer and blasts from dozens of shofars.

Palestinians Urged To Attack

The only strictly Orthodox faction to remain aloof was Degel HaTorah. Its newspaper, Yated Ne'eman, urged tighter ritual observance. It claimed that only if Jews stopped watching television, listening to radio and reading secular newspapers could they invoke divine mercy on Israel.

Meanwhile, Lubavitcher Hasidim handed out leaflets proclaiming Israel to be the safest place in the world, particularly for Jews.

The Lubavitcher rebbe, head of the worldwide Chabad movement, told a group of prominent American Jews who had been considering canceling a scheduled visit to Israel that "the Holy Land is the safest place on Earth."

The rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, who lives in Brooklyn, urged them not only to continue with their plans but to publicize their trip.

Also present at the Western Wall were activists of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane's anti-Arab Kach movement, who handed out flyers demanding that Israel immediately attack Iraq.

Israeli Arab leaders petitioned the leaders of Israel, the United States and Iraq on Monday to make every effort to avoid war. The petition was signed by most of the Israeli Arab political organizations.

They also demanded an international conference to discuss the Palestinian issue but did not link it to Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait.

In the administered territories Monday, leaflets were circulated urging Palestinians to attack Israeli targets in the event a war breaks out in the Gulf.

Security sources were especially concerned that the Palestine Liberation Organization and the fundamentalist Islamic Jihad would launch terrorist attacks in Israel proper.

There was panic Monday in Acre, a mixed Jewish-Arab city on Haifa Bay, when a faulty air raid siren began to wail. Many residents donned gas masks and were rushing to shelters before police convinced them it was a false alarm.

JEWISH LAWMAKERS WERE DIVIDED OVER WHETHER TO AUTHORIZE FORCE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- Jewish members of Congress were as divided as their colleagues in the votes Saturday in which both the Senate and House of Representatives adopted resolutions authorizing President Bush to use the U.S. armed forces to expel Iraq from Kuwait.

The split was mainly among Democrats, since both Jewish Republicans in the Senate and all six Jewish Republicans in the House voted to give the president the authority to use force if Iraq did not leave Kuwait by the Jan. 15 U.N. Security Council deadline.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) was the only Jewish Democrat in the Senate to vote for the authorization, which was adopted by a 52-to-47 vote. The five other Jewish Senate Democrats wanted to continue using sanctions against Iraq beyond the Jan. 15 deadline.

But in the House, where the resolution was adopted by a vote of 250-183, liberal, pro-Israel Democrats, both Jewish and non-Jewish, could be found on both sides of the issue.

The division was primarily between those who wanted to give international sanctions imposed on Iraq more time to work and those who felt action was needed now.

But it was also between those who feared using force against Iraq would engulf the United States in another Vietnam war and those who feared inaction would be like the appeasement of Hitler at Munich that led to World War II.

The principal architect of the House resolution was Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.), who began his political career in 1966 managing the unsuccessful primary campaign of a congressional candidate opposed to the war in Vietnam. Eight of his Jewish Democratic colleagues supported his resolution Saturday.

But the 17 other Jewish members of the House voted against authorizing military force now.

Evil 'Must Be Confronted'

In the debate, Solarz observed that in Vietnam, "vital American interests were never at stake. In the Gulf, they are."

He said that the "great lesson of our time is that evil still exists, and when evil is on the march, it must be confronted."

Other Jewish members of Congress simply argued that there were few real alternatives.

"Saying we need more time for sanctions is an excuse for doing nothing," said Rep. Mel Levine (D-Calif.).

But Rep. Lawrence Smith (D-Fla.) argued that the sanctions were working. He warned that war would bring terrorism, since Saddam Hussein "is a lunatic, and he will blow up any object that he wants to get at Americans. That means we are all at risk."

Smith, like other opponents of the resolution, said he would not want to see American troops lose their lives. "I would rather that they sweated in the desert than be buried in that desert," he said.

Lobbyists for Jewish organizations took a low-key approach to the congressional votes, which came after three days of debate. But when asked by members of Congress for their views, many Jewish lobbyists pointed to statement in support of Bush's policy adopted Jan. 9 by the

Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"We support the policy of the Bush administration in going the extra mile to seek a peaceful resolution of the Gulf crisis while being prepared to take the required steps -- including the use of military force -- to achieve the goals of the international community in opposing Saddam Hussein's aggression," the statement read.

JEWISH INSTITUTIONS IN U.S. WARNED TO TAKE EXTRA SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- Jewish institutions across the United States have been warned they should review security precautions in light of the increased threat of terrorism on U.S. soil that a war in the Persian Gulf is likely to generate.

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council late last week sent out an advisory to its more than 100 member agencies, recommending that security arrangements for office buildings, community centers, synagogues, cemeteries and other communal facilities be double-checked.

The advisory urges caution when handling unusual or suspicious looking parcels, and it suggests Jewish agencies consider employing private security services.

"We wanted all the organizations and agencies to review their arrangements, specifically in light of reports of threats of increased potential for terrorist activity attendant to the Gulf crisis," said Jerome Chanes, NJCRAC's co-director of domestic concerns.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has repeatedly warned that any U.S. facility could become a target of terrorism if hostilities break out, and some Palestinian leaders have echoed his claims.

Officials of Jewish organizations, usually careful in the best of times, are now packing security seminars and ordering a special booklet, "Security for Community Institutions," published by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Jews Could Be Blamed For Casualties

While it is unclear whether terrorists would specifically target American Jewish facilities, some community leaders say that if Israel is drawn into a war against Iraq, an attack on Jewish targets would become more likely.

Some also say that if Hussein is successful in blaming the hostilities on Israel, it could spur U.S. hate groups to attack Jewish institutions.

"If Israel begins to be held responsible for body bags coming back to the United States, I'm not sure what the response will be," said Harriet Bogard, New York regional director for the ADL, which monitors anti-Semitic incidents.

Unconnected with the Gulf crisis, ADL last fall started organizing security seminars in New York after a spate of pipe bomb incidents in the area. But the potential for war in the Gulf, and the concurrent higher risk for Jewish organizations, has prompted ADL to focus seminars specifically on terrorist threats.

Meanwhile, the Rabbinical Assembly is forming a crisis committee to share information and mobilize rabbis, said Irwin Groner, president of the Conservative rabbinic organization.

The committee will hold meetings via conference call as top leaders assess the crisis, coordinate support for Israel and monitor any threats in the United States, he said.

FEW PALESTINIANS TO GET GAS MASKS DESPITE ORDER FROM THE HIGH COURT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- The High Court of Justice on Monday ordered the Defense Ministry to issue gas masks immediately to Palestinians in the administered territories after an angry jurist denounced their distribution to Jewish settlers only as "a scandal."

The issue was brought to the court by a resident of Bethlehem, who applied for a show-cause order against the Defense Ministry and the army. Her counsel argued that under international law, Israel is bound to offer the same protection to the occupied population as to its own citizens.

Israel has been threatened with chemical attack by Iraq if a Persian Gulf war breaks out. But the authorities have maintained that the danger in the territories is minimal.

The government acknowledged that after issuing masks to virtually everyone in Israel, there were only 170,000 available for the 1.4 million residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, of whom about 100,000 are settlers.

Justice Aharon Barak said in that case, Palestinians in the areas of greatest risk -- the Jerusalem area and those with proximity to Israel proper -- should have priority.

He angrily rejected the contention of government lawyers that masks should be withheld from Palestinians because rioters would use them for protection against tear gas.

Although they maintained there was little risk, the defense authorities began distributing gas masks to Jewish settlers this week. They admitted they succumbed to intense pressure from the settlers and their powerful political lobby.

Barak said that amounted to discrimination.

LEVINGER GETS 4 MONTHS IN JAIL

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- Rabbi Moshe Levinger, who was released from prison in August after serving three months for negligent manslaughter, drew a four-month prison sentence Monday for attacking an Arab family in their home in Hebron two years ago and insulting an Israel Defense Force soldier.

The leader of the militant Gush Emunim settlers movement in the West Bank got an extra week in jail for contempt of court after he assailed the judge, the state attorney and Israel's legal system.

His outburst apparently was prompted by the fact that the magistrate who passed sentence, Yoel Tzur, was the same judge who originally acquitted him of the charges.

The prosecution appealed the acquittal. Levinger was retried and convicted on Sept. 23 by Jerusalem District Court, which referred him back to the magistrate for sentencing.

He was found guilty of breaking into the home of the Samuh family in Hebron in May 1988, beating the mother and her son and attempting to attack her 7-year-old daughter.

An IDF reservist who heard the commotion ordered Levinger off the premises. Levinger cursed the soldier and called him a Palestine Liberation Organization sympathizer.

Levinger was released from prison last Aug. 14 after serving 13 weeks for fatally shooting Hassan Salah, an Arab shopkeeper in Hebron, during a stoning incident in September 1988.

U.N. DISCUSSING RESOLUTION DEPLORING ISRAEL'S DEPORTATION OF PALESTINIANS

By Aliza Marcus

UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- A new draft resolution under consideration by the Security Council would criticize Israel for resuming deportations of Palestinians accused of supporting terrorist activities in the administered territories and Israel proper.

The Security Council was to convene Monday night to discuss and possibly vote on the proposed resolution, which was introduced by the seven non-aligned members of the council.

The draft declares that Israel's expulsion of four Palestinians from the Gaza Strip last week was a violation of previous Security Council resolutions and demands that Israel "desist forthwith from deporting other Palestinian civilians from the occupied territories."

It also reaffirms that Israel is "under the obligation to ensure the safe and immediate return of all those deported."

The draft, like the non-binding statement issued by the council on Jan. 3, after an escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip, refers to the "Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem."

Israel is also called upon to adhere to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which protects the rights of civilians living under occupation. Israeli officials have said the convention does not apply to the administered territories, although they say its humanitarian principles are upheld.

In the wake of sharp criticism from the United States, Israel stopped deporting Palestinians from the administered territories more than a year ago. But the practice was resumed Jan. 8, when the four Palestinians from the Gaza Strip were flown to Israel's southern Lebanon security zone.

U.S. Seeking Delay Or Revision

The four were accused of being members of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement based in the Gaza Strip, and of having incited others to commit violence.

They were arrested after two Palestinians from the Gaza Strip fatally stabbed three Jewish factory workers in Jaffa in December. Although the four were not accused of committing the murders, they were charged with issuing guidelines that resulted in escalating violence, including the three slayings.

This draft resolution, introduced Jan. 10 by Cuba, Ecuador, India, Ivory Coast, Yemen, Zaire and Zimbabwe, is the first resolution to be dealt with by the council since Jan. 1, when five of its members were replaced in the annual rotation.

Austria, Belgium, Ecuador, India and Zimbabwe replaced Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, Finland and Malaysia, which had completed their two-year terms.

Colombia and Malaysia had been at the forefront of many of the recent resolutions highly critical of Israel, but it seems that the two were replaced by three new members likely to take harsh positions on Israeli actions.

The United States, which has supported four Security Council moves in the past four months to censure Israel for its treatment of Palestinians in the administered territories, is expected to try to delay, if not kill, discussion of the resolution.

The United States would prefer the council to focus on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

ANTI-ISRAEL ACTIVITY REPORTED AT ANTI-WAR PROTESTS IN EUROPE

By David Kantor

BONN, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- Anti-war demonstrators gave vent to anti-Israel sentiments this past weekend as protests against war in the Persian Gulf took place in Germany, France and South Africa.

An Israeli flag and an American flag were burned after an anti-war rally in Cape Town, South Africa.

Protesters in Bonn and other German cities who demonstrated against the war, organized by leftist groups and in some cases endorsed by church leaders, urged the West to examine Israeli brutality against the Palestinians in the occupied territories before turning on Iraq.

The protesters exhorted the government not to go to war to defend the interests of Jews. Germany is prohibited by its constitution from sending forces to the Persian Gulf, which is outside the NATO area.

Bonn sent 18 jet fighters to Turkey, a NATO member, as a precaution against a possible Iraqi attack.

Anti-war fever ran high in Paris where organizers, including the small Communist Party, claimed a turnout of 200,000, although police estimated no more than 40,000 marchers. Former Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, a Socialist and close friend of President Francois Mitterrand, participated.

However, there were no reports of specifically anti-Israel expressions in French cities where protests were held.

But Nice, on the French Riviera, has become subject to hysteria following rumors that Iraqi terrorists would poison the water supply. Supermarkets there have been stripped of bottled water, sugar and rice by panic-stricken buyers.

The Nice area is a stronghold of Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme right-wing National Front, which is openly anti-Arab and covertly anti-Semitic.

Anti-Israel Rally In Cape Town

In South Africa, which has been wracked by internal violence in recent weeks, about 400 people attended an anti-war rally at a movie house in Cape Town.

As they emerged, masked men shouting "death to Israel and the United States" set fire to the flags of both countries. According to media accounts, the men wore Bedouin-type headdress.

The meeting, organized by the Thornhill Residents Association, was called to protest American and allied involvement in the Mideast.

Foreign Minister Roloef "Pik" Botha came under fire for pledging South African support to U.S. military efforts in the Gulf.

Although the African National Congress supports the U.N. resolution ordering Iraq out of Kuwait, speeches at the rally by prominent ANC figures were marked by strong support for the Palestinian cause and anti-Israel sentiment.

A common thread between Israel and South Africa they said, was imperialism's support for regimes that allowed the exploitation of natural resources.

Israel is not part of the U.S.-led coalition poised to force Iraq out of Kuwait. However, Hussein has vowed to attack Israel if allied troops, led by the United States, attack Iraq. Israel, in turn, says it is ready to defend itself.

BELGIAN LEADERS EMBARRASSED OVER RELEASE OF ARAB TERRORIST

By Yossi Lempkowicz

BRUSSELS, Jan. 14 (JTA) -- Senior government ministers seem embarrassed in the aftermath of a prisoner-for-hostages swap over the weekend that freed a Palestinian terrorist convicted of murdering a Jewish child in Antwerp 10 years ago.

Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens passed off as a coincidence the simultaneous release of Said Nasser from Leuven Prison near Brussels and the freeing of four members of the Houtekins family, who were turned over to Belgian authorities in Cairo on Saturday, after more than three years in captivity.

Nasser, said to belong to the Abu N' al terrorist group, was swiftly removed from Belgium and reportedly also landed in Cairo.

The Jewish community is outraged by the deal, which the news media reported months ago to be pending.

The Foreign Ministry had declined comment in August when a Beirut newspaper reported on an impending exchange. The newspaper had reported that the four members of the Houtekins family would be freed after "final bargaining" between the Belgian government and the Abu Nidal group.

Prime Minister Wilfried Martens denied in a television interview Sunday that there had been negotiations.

Martens said he was aware of how the Jewish community must feel, saying, "This is really hard for me."

Eyskens admitted that it was not a "very glorious" episode but refused to answer questions. He told reporters at a news conference here Sunday that "certain aspects of this affair must remain confidential."

The Israeli ambassador to Belgium, Avi Primor, declined to comment directly on the case. "We consider it a Belgian question," he said. But the envoy said any exchange of a murderer for hostages could not be a balanced transaction.

A Libyan Plot From The Start?

Justice Minister Melchior Wathelet said he understands the Jewish community's concerns, but added that the Belgian authorities had the choice of sending four hostages to their deaths or freeing the prisoner, who was in any event eligible for parole under Belgian law.

Nasser was convicted of the June 1980 grenade attack on a bus outside the Agudat Israel office in Antwerp that was boarding Jewish youngsters for a religious summer camp.

David Kohane, 14, from France was killed and several other boys were wounded.

Nasser got a life sentence, which in Belgium is automatically commuted to 30 years. The prisoner became eligible for parole in July 1990 after serving a third of his sentence.

The four Houtekins and four other members of their yachting party who were previously released were reportedly kidnapped in November 1987 off the Libyan coast and held in Lebanon by the Abu Nidal group, also known as Fatah Revolutionary Council.

But according to news reports here, which cited Arab sources, the idea of seizing the passengers for the release of terrorists imprisoned in the West -- including Nasser -- originated with Ibrahim el-Bishari, former head of the Libyan secret police and currently foreign minister.