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**MAIN THREAT TO ISRAEL FROM IRAQ  
IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED**

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- The massive U.S. aerial bombardment of Iraqi military installations in Iraq and Kuwait appears to have removed the immediate threat of an Iraqi attack on Israeli territory.

President Bush confirmed Wednesday night that an early goal of "Operation Desert Storm," which began shortly after midnight Iraqi time, had been to destroy the country's missile installations and to eliminate its chemical and nuclear weapons capabilities.

"We are determined to knock out Saddam Hussein's nuclear bomb potential. We will also destroy his chemical weapons facilities," the president said in a televised address from the White House Oval Office.

At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said Wednesday night that Iraq had been unprepared for the American attack. While he seemed optimistic about the success of the U.S. operation, he could not say yet whether all targets had been destroyed.

But there were reports that Iraq offered little or no air resistance.

Cheney said that one of the major targets had been Iraq's SCUD missiles in western Iraq, which directly threatened Israel.

Reports on NBC and other television networks said that the U.S. planes had destroyed SCUD launch sites, which apparently had not been armed yet. NBC learned of this from a ham radio operator in Israel who monitored military radio intelligence reports.

The reports said that destruction of the missile sites had been promised by Bush to both Israel and Saudi Arabia.

If these reports are true, then there is little chance that Israel will be attacked, as Saddam Hussein threatened to do.

**Israelis Ordered To Stay Home**

In Israel, where fear that the SCUD missiles would be used to launch chemical weapon attacks against the Jewish state, residents were urged in the early hours of Thursday morning to keep their gas mask kits with them at all times.

"Due to combat that started in the Persian Gulf and as a precautionary measure," residents of Israel are "asked to remain in their homes and open their protective kits," the army said in a message broadcast on Israel Radio around 2:30 a.m. local time.

Both Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Defense Minister Moshe Arens were monitoring the situation from their homes, according to news reports from Israel. Israel Radio reported that Shamir had been informed in advance of the American operation by French and American sources.

Health Minister Ehud Olmert, interviewed on NBC, said that Israelis were "inspired" by Bush's remarks. He said the initial reports were encouraging and "we are all relieved," but that the danger is not over yet for Israel.

"Israel is very appreciative of the courage and vigor of the American servicemen," he said.

But he added that while this is a "one-time experience" for the international force against Iraq, "for us, it is a way of life."

In New York, Shoshana Cardin, newly elected chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said the American Jewish community is "grateful that Israel is not involved in this" and "supportive" of President Bush's actions.

"We feel he took the right step," she said, adding that the president's remarks on the need to destroy Iraqi chemical and nuclear weapons capabilities were "very much on target."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the conference, said, "We pray for the success of the president and our armed forces, and for their safe return. As regrettable as the use of force is, sometimes it is necessary to achieve peace."

**SCHOOLS CLOSED, STREETS WERE EMPTY  
AS ISRAEL AWAITED MILITARY ACTION**

By Cathrine Gerson and Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- The Education Ministry ordered Israeli schools closed Wednesday after consultations with the defense minister and the Israel Defense Force chief of staff.

Nervous parents had kept 25 percent of the student body home from classes Tuesday and about 50 percent had been expected to stay away from classes Wednesday.

Under those circumstances, it was decided to advise all students to stay home, Education Minister Zevulun Hammer announced.

The order applied only to elementary and secondary schools. Universities, teacher training colleges and religious seminaries stayed open. But many students were absent on military duty or taking care of personal matters.

The threat of an Iraqi missile attack on Israel had other visible effects Wednesday.

Normally congested Tel Aviv streets were relatively empty. The light traffic was characteristic of the Sabbath rather than a usual business day.

Many Israelis remained close to their radios and television sets, listening to the news in rooms sealed against gas attack according to IDF instructions.

At factories, shops and offices, it was a normal workday. But many closed early to allow parents to spend more time with their children and be closer to their sealed rooms should a missile attack occur.

But it was at nightfall that the myth of Tel Aviv as "the city that never sleeps" was demolished, at least for the duration of the crisis.

By 7:30 p.m. local time, Ibn Gvirol Street, normally teeming with pedestrians, was almost deserted. The clothing shops that do a brisk business in the evening had closed early. So did the late-night snack shops and late-night grocers.

The video rental shop opposite City Hall was open for business. But while it is usually jammed until midnight with people looking for a movie to rent, the only person in the store Wednesday evening was the clerk yawning with boredom.

"If it stays this way, I will close at 10 o'clock," she told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Even on Dizengoff Street, Tel Aviv's biggest

shopping and entertainment center, most cafes were closed by 6 p.m., and most bars did not bother to open.

Hospitals responded to the uncertain situation by discharging about a fifth of their patients, keeping only those unable to be moved or in need of continuous medical care.

That left plenty of empty beds for casualties should an Iraqi attack occur.

#### **A Staunch Friend Turns Up**

Meanwhile, a staunch friend of Israel turned up unexpectedly Wednesday, despite a prior engagement in New York.

Zubin Mehta, the Indian-born conductor and musical director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, had a commitment to rehearse the New York Philharmonic and was en route there from Vienna when he grew worried about Israel after watching television reports.

"I got as far as Paris and was preparing to board a Concorde when I passed a flight notice announcing a flight to Tel Aviv within the hour," the maestro told an Israel Television interviewer.

"I turned around and took the Israel-bound aircraft," Mehta said. "After all, I was adopted by this country and I felt it my duty to be with the Israelis in a time of emergency."

Asked what his wife in New York and his parents in Bombay thought of his change of plans, he said their reaction was "Gevall!"

#### **WAR THREAT UNIFIED ISRAELI PARTIES, THOUGH SHAMIR STILL HOPED FOR PEACE** By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- The threat of being dragged unwillingly into a Persian Gulf war by Iraq created a rare interlude of unity among Israel's disputatious political factions on the right and left.

Ideological differences were forgotten as mainstream parties across the political spectrum rallied behind the government's policy, which was to keep out of war if at all possible but to defend Israel unreservedly if attacked.

The Knesset on Wednesday witnessed the spectacle of tough left-wing critics of the Likud government -- Yossi Sarid of the Citizens Rights Movement and Mapam's Yair Tzaban -- passionately upholding the government's rejection of France's last-minute peace efforts, which offered Saddam Hussein the linkage he demanded between Kuwait and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Former Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking for the opposition Labor Party, counseled caution but agreed Israel must hit back if attacked.

The country's two largest parties seemed therefore to agree on how to respond in the event of an Iraqi attack.

Speaking for the government, Police Minister Ronni Milo praised his political rivals for their demonstration of patriotic unity. He also praised the United States and Britain for opposing the linkage initiative.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was closeted with political and military aides throughout the day. But he found time to be interviewed on Israel Radio's Arabic service.

Shamir sought to allay public anxiety Wednesday. He said he hoped and believed there could still be a peaceful solution.

Speaking hours before the U.S. military operation began, he conceded that "not every

political solution might be to our liking," but noted that "in principle, our preference is always for a peaceful solution."

Calming public fears was also the purpose of President Chaim Herzog's speech Tuesday on Israel Radio.

The president has frequently gone on the air in times of national stress. While he did not deny the possibility of an Iraqi missile attack on Israel, he said it was far from a certainty.

Herzog drew on his own considerable military experience and on the consensus among senior Israel Defense Force commanders to say Iraq lacked the ability to seriously hurt Israel.

"I completely share the opinion of the chief of staff that the chances of our being directly involved militarily in the crisis are limited and certainly do not exceed defending ourselves from a few missiles which are limited in their accuracy, in their range and in their ability to cause damage," Herzog said.

#### **TERRITORIES ABLAZE WITH RIOTING FOLLOWING PLO ASSASSINATIONS** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- The West Bank and Gaza Strip were ablaze with rioting Tuesday which left three Palestinian teen-agers dead in clashes with Israeli troops.

Curfews clamped over most of the territories remained in effect Wednesday.

The disturbances, likened by witnesses to the earliest, wildest days of the intifada, were triggered by the assassination Monday in Tunis of two top leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization and an aide.

Israel Defense Force units, anticipating relative quiet in the territories because of concern over the Persian Gulf crisis, were confronted by rock-throwing mobs and barricades of burning tires.

As loudspeakers on mosques broadcast prayers of mourning for the slain PLO men, residents poured into the streets waving Palestinian flags and black mourning banners.

IDF patrols were stoned by enraged demonstrators. Soldiers fatally shot Abdul Abeidi, 18, in Yamoun village near Nablus in the West Bank.

Mansur Sheikh, 17, was killed by soldiers in Gaza. A 16-year-old boy, not immediately identified, died Wednesday of wounds inflicted by a rubber bullet Tuesday.

The Israeli authorities had imposed some pre-emptive curfews in the territories to ensure quiet after the murders in Tunis. But apparently they did not gauge the depth of feelings aroused.

The three gunned down in Tunis were Salah Khalaf, known as Abu Iyad, the PLO's No. 2 man after Yasir Arafat; Hail Abdul Hamid, popularly known as Abu Hol, who was chief of security; and Fakhri al-Omari, chief aide to Khalaf.

Their killer, identified as Hamid's bodyguard, Hamza Abu Zeid, was arrested. Sources in Tunis said the murders were the work of the Abu Nidal terrorist gang, which has long been at odds with the PLO.

But Palestinians in the territories are convinced Israel was behind the triple slaying.

Traditional mourning huts were erected near the homes of the Khalaf and Omari families, who live in the Rimal and Sabra neighborhoods of Gaza. Hundreds of residents came to offer condolences. The IDF declared the Gaza Strip a closed military zone and barred the news media.

**FEW U.S. JEWISH LEADERS ATTENDING  
JEWISH AGENCY EXECUTIVE MEETING**  
By Charles Hoffman

JERUSALEM, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- Senior officials of the Jewish Agency for Israel are disappointed at the low turnout of American Jewish leaders invited for a meeting here of the agency Executive, and they attribute the poor showing to war jitters.

None of the top leaders of the United Jewish Appeal or the Council of Jewish Federations who sit on the Executive are attending the meeting, which opened Wednesday.

The Jewish Agency leaders staying away include Marvin Lender, UJA national chairman; Morton Kornreich, chairman of the UJA board of trustees; and CJF President Charles Goodman.

The professional executives of these organizations -- UJA President Stanley Horowitz and CJF Executive Vice President Martin Kraar -- are not attending either, though they are associate members of the Jewish Agency Executive.

Nor is the executive vice chairman of the United Israel Appeal, Herman Markowitz, though its chairman, Norman Lipoff, is attending. A UJA spokesman in New York said Markowitz had to remain in the United States to handle "some important financial negotiations and several matters with the U.S. government."

"This is a shame and a disgrace that at this moment of trial they are not coming here," Meir Sheerit, treasurer of the Jewish Agency, told the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

The American Jewish leaders "should have set an example and come to Israel," he said.

Simcha Dinitz, chairman of the Executive, said the meeting would continue, despite the absence of key Diaspora leaders. "I don't accept any excuses because the (absent) people concerned are front-ranking leadership," he told Ma'ariv.

American Jewish officials in New York observed that the January meeting of the Executive had not been held in Israel in several years. Some indicated privately that they felt it was critical to stay at their posts in the United States at such a critical time in the Middle East.

Besides Lipoff, other Diaspora leaders attending the meeting include Mendel Kaplan, chairman of the Agency Board of Governors; Paul Berger, a CJF vice president who is chairman of the Jewish Agency Budget and Finance Committee; and Bernice Tannenbaum, a UJA vice chairman who is chairman of the American Section of the World Zionist Organization.

**SENATORS SEND LETTER BACKING ISRAEL**  
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- Fifty-six senators wrote a letter to Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval this week reaffirming their "commitment to help Israel defend herself" during any war in the Persian Gulf.

"At this time of danger and uncertainty, we write to express our heartfelt support for and solidarity with our most stalwart and democratic ally in the region," they said in a letter written by Sen. Connie Mack (R-Fla.) and sent Monday.

The senators said they hope "in the aftermath of this crisis, our nations can work together toward our common goal of direct talks leading to peace treaties between Israel and her neighbors."

Of the 56 senators who signed the letter, 43 were Republicans and 13 were Democrats.

**CHIEF RABBI PRAYS FOR PEACE,  
OFFERS SUCCOR TO ROMAN JEWS**  
By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- Italy's chief rabbi, Elio Toaff, offered fervent prayers for peace in the Middle East at the main synagogue here this week and tried to succor Rome's Jewish community, which seems to feel especially vulnerable to terrorist acts.

There are 15,000 Jews in Rome. The main synagogue is in the heart of the old ghetto on the banks of the Tiber was the target of an attack by Arab terrorists in 1982 which left a small child dead and scores of worshippers wounded.

For years afterward, the synagogue and other Jewish institutions were guarded by armed police, and Toaff himself still lives surrounded by bodyguards.

In recent days, the prospect of a war in the Persian Gulf that could possibly involve Israel had heightened tension in the Jewish community.

"We're afraid, and why not?" a young woman asked.

"Every morning we take our children to (the Jewish) school protected by police armed with machine guns, and now these security forces have been increased," she said.

Police officials here have assured Toaff that security measures for the Jewish community would be increased. At the same time, Jewish leaders have been discussing parallel security measures of their own.

Under the circumstances, it was no surprise that the main synagogue was jammed Monday as the U.N.-imposed deadline for the use of force against Iraq approached.

"We pray today that we are spared a war," Rabbi Toaff intoned. "But we know that there cannot be peace, that peace we consider the supreme good, without or against justice."

**MONTREAL JEWS PACK SYNAGOGUE,  
PRAY FOR ISRAEL, PLEDGE SUPPORT**  
By Bram D. Eisenthal

MONTREAL, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- About 1,000 people packed the Beth Israel Beth Aaron Congregation here Tuesday night to pray for Israel and hear community leaders vow Canadian Jewish support for that nation.

The gathering was an emotional outpouring of solidarity for Israel, one of many that took place at locations all over Canada as the U.N.-imposed deadline approached for the use of force to get Iraq out of Kuwait.

At Beth Israel Beth Aaron, an Orthodox congregation, Rabbi Reuben Poupko maintained that it was impossible to separate the security of Israel from that of Jews the world over.

"We have come here to eloquently say that our security is indivisible," the rabbi declared.

With a catch in his voice, he disclosed that he has nine nephews in Jerusalem who had been "outfitted with gas masks" because of Saddam Hussein's threat to devastate Israel with chemical weapons.

Poupko, who chairs the Canadian Jewish Congress' Israel Action Committee, urged Jews to go to Israel to show support.

About 200 Jewish leaders held an Israel solidarity meeting Wednesday at the offices of the Montreal Jewish Federation-Allied Jewish Community Services. Up to 600 were expected at a similar meeting in Toronto.

**NEWS ANALYSIS:****FRENCH PEACE PROPOSAL IRKED ISRAEL, WAS PART OF A LONG-TERM STRATEGY**

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- France's failed 11th-hour attempt at peace diplomacy in the Persian Gulf, which received icy receptions from the United States, Israel and French Jewry, is believed to have been part of a long-term strategy devised by President Francois Mitterrand.

Analysts here say Mitterrand, convinced Western Europe will become the world's new superpower by the end of the century, has been seeking to establish French leadership under the new order.

One of the means toward that goal, they say, is for France to emerge as a mediator between the Arab world and the West, and in a larger context between the advanced nations and the Third World.

But Mitterrand's latest tactics, especially the French plan to avert a Gulf war submitted Tuesday to the U.N. Security Council and later abandoned, have been based on linkage between an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Seen by Israel and its supporters as a demarche at Israel's expense, the initiative has succeeded in alienating French Jews and European Jews generally from Mitterrand.

"I am astonished and I regret the French authorities' attitude, wishing at any price to establish an artificial linkage between the Gulf crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," declared Jean Kahn, head of CRIF, the representative council of French Jewish organizations.

**'Danger Of Outrageous Compromises'**

"I regret the French authorities favor a position that I see to be contrary to French interests by supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization in spite of its total lineup on Saddam Hussein's positions," Kahn told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency on Tuesday.

Representatives of Jewish communities in 15 countries affiliated with the European Jewish Congress declared their "total solidarity with the State of Israel" at a meeting here last weekend.

They urged European governments "to reject maliciously false linkages with totally unrelated issues" and warned of "the danger of outrageous compromises whose only consequences would be to lead to new and more devastating confrontations."

The French plan was flatly rejected by Israel. It got sharply negative responses from Washington, London and from Baghdad, even as the U.N.-imposed deadline for an Iraqi pullout from Kuwait expired at midnight Tuesday.

Nevertheless, French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, though not invited to Baghdad as he had hoped, let it be known as late as Tuesday that he remained available for last-minute peace efforts.

A government spokesman stressed, however, that Paris respects the U.N. ultimatum and would discharge its obligations as a member of the U.S.-led coalition trying to oust Iraq from Kuwait.

On Wednesday, just hours before the hostilities began, the French parliament voted overwhelmingly to authorize the involvement of some 10,000 French troops stationed in Saudi Arabia.

According to observers here, the seeming contradiction between France's reluctance and willingness to use force was a tactic by Mitterrand to be on the winning side. He has committed

sufficient French troops to the Gulf to give him a voice, but not enough to weaken his popularity at home in the event of heavy casualties.

At the same time, he has kept in constant touch with Arab leaders from both camps. He will be remembered by the Iraqis and Palestinians as the man who tried until the very last moment to find a compromise solution for peace.

**Planning For A Postwar Role**

The French are believed to be planning already for the postwar period, which they expect will be marked for a long time by an abiding hatred in the Arab world of America and Britain, the chief U.S. ally in the Gulf confrontation.

France expects to be asked to play a major role in the postwar period because it participated in the coalition to liberate Kuwait and yet remained on good terms with the Arab countries.

The French informed neither the United States nor Britain of their peace plan until it was presented to the Security Council. Mitterrand reportedly was mute on the subject when he received the British prime minister, John Major, in Paris on Monday.

The American and British envoys to the Security Council both strongly opposed the French plan, under which Iraqi troops in Kuwait would have withdrawn and been replaced by an international Arab force and international observers. The U.N. coalition allies, in turn, would have promised not to attack Iraq.

But the plan linked the Iraqi withdrawal to a solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It pledged an international conference for the purpose would be convened at an appropriate time.

In Jerusalem, Israel's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on the plan, saying "Israel opposes any initiative which breaks the international solidarity against Iraq's aggression."

"Israel also opposes any direct or implied connection with the occupation of Kuwait and the Arab-Israeli conflict," the statement said.

Mitterrand's vision of a European-dominated world order is shared by the technocrats in Brussels who run the European Community.

In the French president's view, Europe will fill the vacuum created by the rapid deterioration of the Soviet Union and the alienation of the Arab world by the United States.

**Israel Could Be The Big Loser**

Britain, in the French view, will play a relatively minor role, because it will be perceived as an appendage of Washington.

Germany and Japan will, of course, be the economic superpowers. But in Mitterrand's view, Germany cannot challenge French political preeminence on the continent while its energies are expended trying to digest unification.

Should the expectations of France and the E.C. bureaucrats materialize, Israel could be the big loser. Western Europe was advocating an international conference for Middle East peace long before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and tried to impose linkage.

But according to observers, Mitterrand, who is not unfriendly to Israel, believes Israelis in the long run will attain the stability and security to which they aspire.

The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published on Monday, Jan. 21, which is Martin Luther King Day in the United States.