

U.S. CONSIDERING ISRAELI REQUEST FOR \$1 BILLION IN ADDITIONAL AID

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- The Bush administration is weighing an Israeli request for \$1 billion in military aid to cover the costs of the Israel Defense Force's added preparedness during the Persian Gulf crisis.

State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said Monday that Israel submitted the request formally last Friday.

The request came as President Bush was sending Congress two emergency spending bills for 1991.

One bill is exclusively devoted to covering the Pentagon's costs during Operation Desert Storm and could not serve as the vehicle for supplemental aid to Israel.

The second bill, for a potpourri of domestic overspending since last Oct. 1, does not contain any money for Israel. But members of Congress appear to be anxious to help Israel and themselves politically at the same time by attaching aid for Israel to this bill.

Pro-Israel activists had predicted Israel would hold off on making a formal request for extra assistance until it was clear there was a legislative vehicle to attach it to.

Although it could take months for any additional aid to gain congressional approval, Israel is in no particular hurry.

An official at the Israeli Embassy here said Israel does not want such aid to be seen as a direct payoff for its restraint in responding to Iraq's repeated Scud missile attacks.

One pro-Israel lobbyist suggested Israel had erred by asking for exactly \$1 billion, saying the request would have been better received if it were the \$910 million figure used by Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens two weeks ago in meetings with senior U.S. officials.

The \$910 million figure included Israel's added military costs projected through April 1. Asked how the figure jumped \$90 million so fast, the Israeli Embassy official speculated that it may have stemmed from the costs incurred from some of the latest Scud attacks.

Israel receives \$3 billion each year in regular economic and military assistance from the United States. In addition, it just received U.S. guarantees for \$400 million in loans to build housing for Soviet Jewish immigrants.

TWO MORE SCUDS STRIKE ISRAEL, CAUSING NO DAMAGE OR CASUALTIES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- As allied troops pushed into Kuwait and Iraq, executing the long-anticipated ground war, two Scud missile alerts kept Israelis awake through the early hours of Monday morning.

Following sirens that sounded at 3:30 and 5:30 a.m. local time, the missiles, fired from western Iraq, came down on Israel but caused no casualties or damage.

They were the 38th and 39th missiles launched at Israel from western Iraq since the Persian Gulf war began five weeks ago, and the

first since the ground assault was launched in the wee hours of Sunday morning.

Civil defense authorities said the missiles landed in the area designated Zone 6, which covers the southern part of the country, including the Negev.

The alert did not stop longshoremen at Haifa port from unloading eight Dutch Patriot anti-missile batteries sent to Israel by the Netherlands government to help in its defense.

The Patriots arrived by sea from Bremerhaven, Germany. They will be operated by Dutch air force specialists who flew to Israel on Sunday.

The Dutch Patriots, of the type designed to bring down enemy aircraft, will have to be modified to intercept missiles. Israel Radio said they would be deployed in the Jerusalem area.

Meanwhile, Israel Radio, which had stopped broadcasting weather reports since the war started, advised Israelis on Monday that a line of thunder storms was working its way south through the country and said not to panic if they hear loud noises.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**PALESTINIANS STILL BACKING HUSSEIN, BUT RECOGNIZE NEED FOR A 'NEW ORDER'**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- Influential Arab leaders in the administered territories are beginning to recognize the need for a "new Palestinian order" in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war, within the context of the larger "new order" that is likely to emerge in the Middle East.

Some are quietly suggesting that the Palestinians scale back their aspirations for an independent state and be prepared to settle for some measure of autonomy over the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Already there are signs of distancing between the local Palestinian leadership in the territories and the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership, which resides overseas.

While the Palestinians in the territories may continue to accept Yasir Arafat as a symbolic "president of Palestine," his authority is increasingly being challenged.

But Saddam Hussein of Iraq will continue to be a factor. The Palestinian masses who hailed him as their savior will not easily admit they backed the wrong "hero."

He was the first Arab leader to "shake them out of their defeatism," explained Zakaria al-Qaq, an instructor at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah.

Palestinians do not readily admit mistakes. They simply rationalize that there was "no alternative."

That was their excuse for failing to accept the 1947 U.N. partition plan, rejecting the 1978 Camp David accords and now casting support for Saddam Hussein.

However humiliating the defeat that awaits Hussein at the hands of the allied military coalition, he will be revered by the Palestinians.

"The Western mind will say that Saddam committed suicide. But the Arab mind will say he died a martyr," Dr. Mehdi Abdul-Hadi, head of the Palestine Academic Center for International

Affairs in East Jerusalem, told the Jerusalem Post this week.

There is some rational dissent from that viewpoint, notably from Elias Freij, the veteran mayor of Bethlehem, who spoke out against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait from the start.

'What The Street Dictates'

But voices of reason are a rare commodity in Palestinian political discourse -- at least in terms of Israeli thinking. Freij's influence does not extend much beyond his office in Manger Square.

Because they backed Hussein, the Palestinians have lost the support of world opinion. They have also lost an estimated \$1.4 billion a year in jobs and financial support from the Gulf states. And they may have lost whatever political gains were achieved in the intifada.

Yet Palestinian youths continued this week to demonstrate for Saddam Hussein in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinians are loathe to explain their motivations to Westerners. Perhaps it is unseemly to admit they are driven by pure hatred of Israel, of the West and of whomever else they perceive to be responsible for their continued plight.

Ghareb Hashashibi, an Arab mayor of Jerusalem under the British Mandate, once said apologetically: "I know I am taking the wrong step, but this is what the street dictates."

Not much seems to have changed in over four decades.

The street continues to dictate the political behavior of the Palestinian leadership.

The young street leaders in the territories, born since 1967, know nothing but life under Israeli administration. Unlike their elders, they lack a perspective from which to regret their mistakes.

In the name of Palestinian nationalism, radical street elements have spoken out against influential Palestinian leaders such as Faisal Husseini of East Jerusalem, who preaches non-violent resistance and has advocated a two-state solution.

Time For A New Peace Formula

The Palestinian "new order" will not emerge without a power struggle pitting the PLO abroad against the radical street elements in the territories.

Ali Yaish, editor of the East Jerusalem daily A-Sha'ab, predicted the PLO would have to adopt some Islamic fundamentalist slogans to regain popularity.

Jonathan Kuttub, an East Jerusalem lawyer, thinks the Gulf war will produce a chain reaction of "progressive" Islamic-inspired social revolutions led, not by fanatical mullahs, but by Moslem leaders who have come to terms with the modern world.

An East Jerusalem Arab political scientist, speaking off the record, said this week that the Palestinians would have to adopt a new peace formula after the war.

He believes it will have to be a compromise between the independent Palestinian state that Israel opposes and the Israeli version of Palestinian autonomy, which the Palestinians reject.

The political scientist said the Palestinians should accept the principle of local elections, which is part of the Camp David autonomy formula, but should make sure the elections are absolutely free of Israeli control.

PURIM GARB INSPIRED BY GULF WAR, BUT 'SADDAM MASKS' WON'T BE SEEN
By Cathrine Gerson

TEL AVIV, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- The Persian Gulf war is influencing how Israeli youngsters will dress when Purim festivities begin Wednesday night.

Favorites among the kids include the camouflage outfits worn by American soldiers operating Patriot anti-missile batteries.

But according to one toy shop, the most popular item is a child-size Israel Defense Force uniform, which comes with a pair of glasses and a name tag reading "Nachman Shai, Army Spokesman."

Gen. Shai, the official IDF spokesman whose face appears on television every time a Scud missile alert sounds, has had more media exposure in recent weeks than most superstars.

His reassuring tones have earned him the sobriquet "National Valium."

Purim costumes are priced between \$20 and \$25. Some vendors are offering 20 percent off for the traditional disguises -- Esther, Mordechai, Haman -- which are not selling as well as the modern war-inspired dress.

Soviet olim are an exception to this, however. For their children, dressing up as the heroes, heroines or villains of the Megillah is a novelty, because most of them never celebrated Purim in their lives.

Israeli manufacturers, by tacit agreement, refrained from producing what they are sure would have been the runaway best-seller this Purim: a Saddam Hussein mask.

The modern-day Haman would have outsold the original, said one costumer. "But I decided against making money on this war. Making a Saddam costume would be like making a Hitler costume," he said.

That hasn't stopped bakers from turning out "Saddamashen," which look and taste exactly like Hamantashen.

ISRAELI TOURISM DOWN 80 PERCENT
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- The slump in tourism is continuing with no relief in sight, although Israelis who decided to sit out the Persian Gulf war abroad are beginning to come home.

The figures released here for the first half of February are depressing for the tourist industry, which is a leading earner of foreign currency.

Fewer than 6,000 visitors logged in at Ben-Gurion Airport between Feb. 1 and 15, more than 80 percent less than for the same period last year.

In January, 23,000 tourists came to Israel, a drop of 73 percent from January 1990.

Industry sources say there is no economic justification at this point for foreign airlines to resume service to Israel, which they suspended more than five weeks ago as war became imminent.

But substantially more Israelis are arriving at the airport than are leaving at this time, an indication that the mass exodus of Israelis fleeing Scud missile attacks has been reversed.

Tourism officials hope the successful outcome of the war against Iraq will revive tourism here in time for the spring season.

**POLITICIAN ANGERS CANADIAN JEWS
BY CHARGING ISRAEL 'GASSES' ARABS**

 By S. Adam Korbin
The Jewish Western Bulletin

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- A member of the Canadian Parliament who would become foreign minister if his left-of-center New Democratic Party should win the next election takes an extreme anti-Israel position that has raised the ire and fears of Canadian Jews.

Svend Robinson, whose constituency borders Vancouver, has charged that Israel has "gassed" Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank. Robinson used the term "gassing" to describe Israel's use of tear gas to quell rioting.

The remark, which Robinson made at a meeting of his constituency of Burnaby-Kingsway late in January, was called "extremely offensive" by Simon Kahn, public affairs director of the Ottawa-based Canada-Israel Committee.

His use of that particular word "displays regrettable insensitivity," Kahn said in a statement released to The Jewish Western Bulletin.

"The term 'gassing' draws a parallel -- whether consciously or otherwise -- to the gassing of Jews at the hands of Nazis during the Holocaust," he observed.

Robinson is his party's external affairs critic, meaning that in the event the New Democratic Party came to power, he would be secretary of state for external affairs, the office now held by Joe Clark of the governing Progressive Conservative Party. The opposition NDP is currently running a strong second to the Progressive Conservatives in opinion polls.

At the January meeting, attended by 200 people, Robinson blamed Israel for the plight of the Palestinian people since the 1967 war.

1982 Massacres Cited

"The reality is that there has been a profound injustice for decades for Palestinians on the occupied West Bank and Gaza," he said.

Robinson also chastised Israel for flouting U.N. resolutions. "There has been, for 23 years, contempt for international law, U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338," he said.

Robinson accused Israel of employing terror against Palestinians. He referred to the 1982 massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in West Beirut by Lebanese Christian Phalangists allied with Israel.

Kahn accused Robinson of being unfairly selective in apportioning exclusive blame to Israel for the circumstances of Palestinians.

"It is the Arab nations, with the sole exception of Egypt, who have consistently maintained their refusal to recognize Israel and negotiate peace with her," he said.

He reminded Robinson that U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 call for Arab recognition of Israel and their formal renunciation of the state of war.

Late last year, Robinson initiated a mission to Iraq with two members of Parliament, Lloyd Axworthy and Bob Corbett, to negotiate the release of Canadian hostages.

He told the Toronto Globe and Mail before leaving that he intended to link Israel with a resolution of the Persian Gulf crisis, which Iraq's Saddam Hussein has been seeking all along.

Several local Jews who attended Robinson's constituency meeting said they were too intimidated by his supporters to raise questions.

**BATTLE OVER ONE KNESSET SEAT
TO BE FOUGHT IN SPECIAL VOTE**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- The Orthodox Degel HaTorah and the right-wing Tehiya parties are girding for an electoral rematch at two polling stations in the Bnei Brak-Ramat Gan area northeast of Tel Aviv.

The reason for the second round of voting is Tehiya's challenge that Degel masterminded fraudulent votes at two polling places during the Nov. 30, 1988 Knesset elections.

The special elections were ordered after a district court upheld Tehiya's charge.

The Central Elections Committee, a statutory body presided over by a judge from the High Court of Justice, was to set the date of the polling on Tuesday.

Tehiya, which has three Knesset seats, claims it would have had a fourth but for ballots "cast" by deceased or otherwise absentee voters for the Degel list.

Tehiya would seem to have an advantage, because the Agudat Yisrael party, which has a large constituency in the district, is quietly lining up behind it.

Agudah, as strictly religious as Degel, is instructing its members to vote for the secular Tehiya because it has been feuding bitterly with the rival Orthodox faction.

Degel HaTorah was founded shortly before the 1988 elections by Rabbi Eliezer Schach, the sage of Bnei Brak.

Schach broke with the Agudah because he believes it is under the influence of the Chabad Hasidic movement, led by the Brooklyn-based Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, whom he has accused of heresy.

Should Tehiya win the special election, Degel would be reduced to one Knesset seat. But the strength of the Likud government would be unchanged, since both parties are coalition members.

BIKER-BANDIT GETS 20 YEARS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- A Tel Aviv District Court judge pronounced a 20-year prison sentence Monday on confessed bank robber Ronnie Leibovitz, whose debonair style and daring motorcycle getaways made him a folk hero here.

Leibovitz, scion of a well-to-do family, confessed to having robbed 22 banks in the Tel Aviv area at gunpoint in the course of a year before police finally caught up with him.

His take in the daring robberies was some \$150,000, all of which he reportedly returned to the banks.

But Judge Victoria Ostrovsky-Cohen slapped Leibovitz with the maximum sentence for armed robbery. She blamed a sensation-mongering news media for tagging the masked bandit with the reputation of a "Robin Hood," which earned him undeserved public sympathy.

"This Robin Hood acted out of personal greed and put his ill-gotten gains in his own pocket," the judge said.

Leibovitz admitted he robbed banks to sustain an expensive lifestyle and finance the construction of a luxury villa in one of Tel Aviv's affluent neighborhoods.

Leibovitz' mask-cum-motorbike getup has become a favorite Purim costume for children this week.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
SAFEGUARDING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
AGAIN A PRIORITY OF JEWISH GROUPS**
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25 (JTA) -- Safeguarding religious liberty has once again moved to the fore as a major domestic priority of American Jewish groups this year.

In both the legislative and judicial arenas, Jewish groups are working to achieve the maximum degree of religious freedom without violating the constitutional separation of church and state.

High on the agenda of Jewish groups ranging from the liberal American Jewish Congress to the strictly Orthodox Agudath Israel of America is seeking passage of a bill called the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The bill is an attempt to circumvent a U.S. Supreme Court ruling last spring that, in effect, permitted states to enact laws infringing on certain religious liberties without having to prove a "compelling state interest."

The case in question involved an Oregon statute barring use of the hallucinogenic drug peyote, which American Indians use for sacramental purposes. The high court ruled that the state's need to regulate controlled substances, in effect, overrode the Indians' right to engage in this particular religious ritual.

Jewish groups fear the ruling could be used by states as a precedent to prohibit such ritual practices as the drinking of Kiddush wine by minors or the kosher slaughter of certain animals.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act would, in effect, require states once again to prove a "compelling interest" before infringing on religious liberties.

Jewish groups are also pursuing related legislation at the state level. One of their concerns is that state courts might use the Supreme Court precedent to deny exemptions from zoning laws routinely given to synagogues.

Kosher Certification Registry

Some Jewish groups are also lobbying on behalf of a bill soon to be introduced in Congress called the Public Disclosure of Religious Dietary Certification Act.

The bill, crafted by Agudath Israel and backed by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, would create a registry at the Food and Drug Administration for kosher certification symbols and would allow lawsuits to be filed against distributors of food falsely labeled kosher.

But one of the top certification agencies, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, has withheld support, citing concerns about language in the bill that could conflict with state laws already on the books.

And AJCongress has been hesitant to support the bill because of concern that it will put the government in the position of having to deal with issues of religious certification. It would regard that as a violation of the First Amendment's ban on government endorsement of religion.

The tension between allowing free exercise of religion and prohibiting government endorsement of it is expected to be played out in the courts again this year, and Jewish groups already have their eyes on a number of cases.

The Supreme Court has no such cases on its docket at the moment, but it is considering a petition, Lee vs. Weisman, that challenges a 1990 U.S. Court of Appeals decision that ruled as

unconstitutional a rabbi's prayer at a public high school graduation ceremony in Providence, R.I.

The case was originally brought by the family of Deborah Weisman, one of the graduating students, who maintained that the inclusion of a prayer in the ceremony violated the separation of church and state barred by the First Amendment.

The family was backed by AJCongress, which filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case.

Administration Enters Case

Last week, the Bush administration filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of the school in Providence, which is appealing the ruling.

Its brief argued that unlike organized prayer in public schools, banned since 1962, graduation prayers occur once a year and take place in the presence of "families as a whole," which it said serve as "a natural bulwark against any coercion," the Washington Post reported.

In any event, if the case is accepted, it would not be heard earlier than the fall.

Another case dealing with the degree of religion allowed in the public schools is one challenging the creation by New York state of a special school district in Monroe County to provide remedial education for children of Satmar Hasidim living in a cohesive community there.

In an earlier case, the New York State Court of Appeals held that while the school district could not be required to provide remedial instruction away from the public schools, which the Satmars do not attend, such instruction would not be unconstitutional.

When the school district did not respond by providing such services, the state legislature created a special school district. The challenge to the new state law is being heard by the New York State Supreme Court, which in New York is the state's lowest court.

Also being tested in the courts is the issue of government aid to parochial schools, which is opposed by secular Jewish groups, but not Orthodox ones. Cases are pending in federal district courts in Kentucky, Louisiana and Missouri.

These states provide funds to private religious schools that run "shared time" programs. Under such programs, public school students spend part of the regular school hours in publicly funded religious education in a private school, or when public funds are used at private schools to teach remedial education.

More Debate On Vouchers

At the federal level, debate is expected to continue on the idea of government-funded vouchers that would assist parents who opt to send their children to private schools.

Although budget constraints in Washington will likely prevent any new major federal spending, President Bush's proposed 1992 budget contains \$330 million for voucher programs. Bush also proposed that Congress allow states to use as much as \$225 million in block grants for that use.

More likely is that Congress will approve a small "pilot program" allowing the use of vouchers, said Marc Stern, co-director of the AJCongress Commission on Law and Social Action.

The subject of prayer in the public schools could also arise again. At the opening of the 102nd Congress last month, proposed constitutional amendments allowing voluntary prayer in the public schools were introduced in both the Senate and House of Representatives. But observers say the initiatives are unlikely to go anywhere.