

**CHEMICAL-TIPPED ROCKETS DISCOVERED,
MEANING ISRAEL CAN'T LET DOWN GUARD**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- American troops advancing into Iraq and Kuwait have discovered chemical-tipped Katyusha rockets, abandoned on the battlefield by retreating Iraqi troops, the Israel Defense Force chief of staff has disclosed.

The discovery of stockpiles of Katyusha rockets with chemical warheads means Israel cannot yet relax its guard against an unconventional weapons attack, Gen. Dan Shomron warned Wednesday night on Israeli television.

Shomron did not say in which country the weapons were found.

But he asserted that as far as he knew, the Baghdad government had ordered its field commanders to use the weapons if under attack. He could not explain why the commanders had so far failed to do so.

The chief of staff insisted that Israel maintain its high level of alert against chemical attack, even at this late stage of the Persian Gulf war.

Unlike Scud missiles, which have a range of several hundred miles, the Soviet-made Katyushas are a tactical short-range weapon small enough to be easily portable.

The Iraqis have launched 39 Scud missiles at Israel since Jan. 18, all with conventional high-explosive warheads. Nevertheless, Israelis were instructed to put on gas masks and take shelter in gas-proof, sealed rooms every time an air raid alert sounded.

The commander in chief of U.S. forces in the Gulf, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, said Wednesday that U.S. pilots had "a very successful day" Tuesday destroying Scud missile-launchers in western Iraq used to attack Israel.

Threat Destroyed For 'Years To Come'

But the Israeli daily Ma'ariv said Wednesday there is concern in Israel that the war might end before the missile problem is solved, in which case Israel may need to consider acting.

Shomron said, however, that the Scuds were a marginal element of the potential threat Israel faces from an "eastern front."

The main threat has been the massive numbers of Iraqi tanks, artillery pieces and armored personnel carriers, the Israel Defense Force chief said, noting that these were being smashed by the U.S.-led coalition forces.

Shomron said that from Israel's standpoint, the key strategic outcome of the war is that the Iraqi threat has been substantially reduced "for many years to come."

Ma'ariv reported that almost all of Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical infrastructure has been destroyed.

According to the newspaper, advancing allied forces discovered in the last few days their success in arresting Iraq's ability to produce unconventional weapons was greater than expected.

Shomron said in reply to questions that the quick collapse of the Iraqi army was attributable, above all, to the weeks of aerial bombardment.

Any army could lose its will to fight under those circumstances, when faced with inexorable defeat, he said.

Asked if the IDF had not overestimated the Iraqi army's strength, Shomron said, "Just weeks ago, people were demanding an inquiry commission on why we underestimated the Iraqi strength."

"Apparently, we'll need two commissions working in parallel," the chief of staff quipped, acknowledging that his answer was cynical.

**U.S. WANTS TO DESTROY IRAQ'S
OFFENSIVE MILITARY CAPABILITY**
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- Looking ahead to the future security of the Persian Gulf region, as well as the entire Middle East, the Bush administration has made clear that it wants to destroy Iraq's offensive military capability while liberating Kuwait.

The administration also has begun planning for the postwar situation in the region, including the next step in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker met Wednesday with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and will hold similar meetings Thursday and Friday with the French and German foreign ministers, Roland Dumas and Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

"The liberation of Kuwait is almost complete," Bush told participants at a White House conference Wednesday.

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said Saddam Hussein's call on Iraqi troops to mount the "mother of all battles" has become "the mother of all retreats."

But despite the liberation of Kuwait City and the ongoing retreat of Iraqi forces, the Iraqi president has not yet unconditionally accepted the 12 U.N. Security Council resolutions needed to end the fighting, the White House maintained Wednesday.

It was responding to a letter Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz sent to the United Nations, saying Iraq would abide by the U.N. resolutions if there were an immediate cease-fire and an end to the worldwide economic sanctions and blockade against Iraq.

"This is still a conditional offer and falls far short of what is necessary," White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said.

While telling the American Legion that the end of the fighting is only a few days away, Cheney said the liberation of Kuwait would not mark the completion of the coalition's goals.

"Even after we've achieved our military objectives, even after we've destroyed (Hussein's) offensive military capability and expelled his forces from Kuwait, liberated Kuwait, the world will still be vitally interested in the future course of events with respect to the kinds of activities and policies pursued by the government in Baghdad," Cheney said.

He explained that this means "Saddam Hussein or whoever is in power in Baghdad does not use the enormous wealth of Iraq to simply build a brand new military machine that once again threatens the peace and stability of the region."

ISRAEL RECEIVING VITAL ARMS FROM U.S. ON EXPEDITED BASIS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- The United States has speeded up delivery of vital weapons to Israel, including Apache attack helicopters, which have arrived two years ahead of the original Israel Defense Force target dates.

David Ivri, director general of the Israeli Defense Ministry, disclosed the accelerated schedule in an interview to be published here Friday in the National Religious Party newspaper Hatzofeh.

Ivri, who accompanied Defense Minister Moshe Arens during his Feb. 11 meeting in Washington with Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, also cited the speedy delivery of U.S. Patriot anti-missile systems after the first Iraqi missile attack on Israel as an example of the high-level strategic cooperation between the two countries.

"I have no doubt that the implementation of certain logistical steps, such as the delivery of Patriots, at the pace which has occurred until now, is the result of the infrastructure which was established by strategic cooperation," Ivri said.

Ten attack helicopters and 12 early-model F-15 aircraft were part of the \$700 million in special military assistance the Bush administration promised Israel after Iraq invaded Kuwait.

"But delivery was delayed when the Gulf war started" on Jan. 17, military analyst Ze'ev Schiff wrote in the Feb. 21 edition of The Jerusalem Report, an English-language weekly.

"Israel was informed that not all the promised equipment might be available: Some was needed for the war, and the whole list would have to be reassessed later on," Schiff wrote.

But "as things developed, instead of the one Patriot that the United States had promised, six were sent to Israel," Schiff pointed out, adding that some might remain there after the war.

Ivri told Hatzofeh that strategic cooperation with Washington has become "normal, mutual and reaches the highest levels." He said this cooperation "maintains ongoing work and creates important personal relations."

Speaking of Israel's policy of restraint in face of Iraqi Scud missile attacks, the Defense Ministry official said it is the government's duty to discuss and determine when to respond.

"This deliberation indicates the state's maturity and reflects on the existence of our military capability and the possibility of the country's response," he said.

Israel has received word from the Dutch government, meanwhile, that it will not have to pay Holland for missiles fired by the eight Dutch Patriot batteries that arrived here Sunday night.

The anti-missile systems were positioned west of Jerusalem Monday afternoon and are now operational.

(JTA correspondent Henrietta Boas in Amsterdam contributed to this report.)

FOREIGN AIR SERVICE TO ISRAEL, SUSPENDED FOR WAR, NOW RESUMES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- Foreign airlines are about to resume service to Israel, which they suspended in mid-January on the eve of the Persian Gulf war.

Greece's Olympic Airlines, the last of the international carriers to abandon Ben-Gurion Airport, will return there on March 5.

Olympic has not flown to Israel since Jan. 15, the U.N. deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. For the time being, it will fly twice weekly from Athens, returning eventually to its former schedule of three flights a week.

British Airways will follow Olympic. Germany's Lufthansa had planned to be the first foreign airline to resume service to Israel. But that decision was postponed for unspecified reasons.

Lufthansa expects to be flying here again some time next week.

The withdrawal of foreign carriers in time of crisis proved the value of El Al, Israel's national airline. For the past five weeks, it has been Israel's only regular air connection with the rest of the world.

Tower Air, an American charter service, also continued to fly to Israel but was limited by its insurers to carrying outbound passengers only.

Malev, the Hungarian national airline, has resumed charter flights bringing Soviet immigrants to Israel via Budapest. There have never been direct flights from Moscow.

PRAYERS SAID FOR SPARING ISRAEL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- President Chaim Herzog and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir led worshipers in a special prayer service Wednesday combining thanks for sparing Israel from the Persian Gulf war and prayers for the safety of the allied forces fighting Iraq.

U.S. Ambassador William Brown headed a contingent of the foreign diplomatic corps attending the service at the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem. They joined in the reading of psalms.

The occasion was the Fast of Esther, the day before Purim, recalling the decree of death that had been made for the Jews in ancient Persia by their oppressor, Haman.

The Fast of Esther also commemorates the fast Queen Esther both undertook personally and requested of the Jews, to pray that King Ahasuerus, her husband, would not punish her with death for visiting him without being summoned. She was going to him to plead for her people.

Wednesday's service was conducted by Israel's Ashkenazic chief rabbi, Avraham Shapira, and the cantor of the Great Synagogue, Naftali Hershtik.

REBBE PREDICTED WAR'S END BY PURIM

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- Months before Iraqi Scud missiles began to rain on Israel, long before the ground war began, the Brooklyn-based Lubavitcher rebbe predicted that the Persian Gulf war would end on or near Purim.

A young member of the Hasidic movement, a chaplain serving in the U.S. armed forces, went to the rebbe one Sunday in November to get a dollar for tzedakah and a blessing from the spiritual leader.

It was then that Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson told him the war would be more than likely over by Purim, according to Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, the Lubavitch movement's spokesman.

Krinsky, who would not characterize the rebbe's estimation of when the war would end as a prophecy, described it as "clarity, 'ruach hakodesh' (holy spirit) that you and I don't have. This is the rebbe."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: SOVIETS HOPE INITIATIVE ON IRAQ WILL BUY THEM SEAT AT PEACE TABLE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- The Soviet Union, which has long sought to be part of the process of finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, believes its diplomatic effort to convince Saddam Hussein to pull out of Kuwait is its ticket for admission.

The Soviet Union continues to be part of the anti-Iraq coalition despite its opposition to the use of force, Viacheslav Matousov, the Soviet Embassy's Middle East expert, told a group of reporters here Monday.

Matousov said the Soviets opposed the war against Iraq, which began Jan. 17, because they feared it would ignite a larger Arab-Israeli war.

He said the Soviets now fear that if the right political solution is not reached at the end of the Persian Gulf war, it could exacerbate the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Matousov, who was chief of Palestinian and Lebanese affairs in the international department of the Communist Party Central Committee from 1975 to 1989, was responding to questions at a luncheon meetings of the Overseas Writers Club, an organization of diplomatic correspondents.

He insisted that the Soviet Union has to be part of any Middle East peace, because as a neighbor of countries in that region, it is affected by what happens there.

"We are part of this process. We can't avoid this responsibility of ours," Matousov said.

He observed that even Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir now believes the Soviet Union should be involved in a peace settlement.

New Playing A 'Positive Role'

While the United States has sought to keep the Soviet Union out of the Middle East since the end of World War II, this attitude is changing, Secretary of State James Baker indicated Sunday.

Up to now, the Soviets have played "a negative role" in the Middle East, Baker said on ABC-TV's "This Week with David Brinkley."

"Ever since the 3rd of August, when they stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States -- at least with respect to the Gulf crisis -- they have played a positive role," the secretary said.

By playing a positive role, the Soviets can "contribute significantly to the resolution" of some of the problems in the Middle East, he said.

Baker and President Bush have refused to condemn Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev publicly for his initiative last week to end the fighting, which some see as an attempt to play up the Soviets as a friend of the Arabs.

While privately peeved, the Bush administration has sought to bolster Gorbachev's shaky government and to keep the Soviets in the anti-Iraq coalition.

That is also one explanation given for the statement issued by Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh after a Jan. 29 meeting in Washington, in which they said that after the Gulf war there would be "mutual U.S.-Soviet efforts to promote Arab-Israeli peace and regional stability."

But Matousov made clear Monday that the Soviet Union still believes the way to this is an international peace conference, to include the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

Israel is adamantly opposed to such a con-

ference. The Bush administration has said it prefers direct negotiations but, if those fail, it could support such a conference at "an appropriate time."

The administration has fought all efforts to link such a conference with the Persian Gulf crisis, while the Soviets initially supported Saddam Hussein's efforts to make such a conference a condition for his withdrawal from Kuwait.

No Break In Ties With PLO

Matousov stressed that the Soviet Union is flexible about a conference and does not demand it. But Moscow believes it is necessary, because any agreements reached between Israel and the Arabs will require guarantees.

"Who gives the guarantees if not the international community?" the Soviet official asked.

Matousov stressed that an international conference would provide the framework for Israel to engage in bilateral negotiations with its Arab neighbors. This appears to be a move toward the U.S. position, which has been that if such a conference were held, it could not dictate or veto agreements reached through direct negotiations.

Matousov suggested that an international conference could be a "fine opportunity to restore full diplomatic relations" between the Soviet Union and Israel.

He observed that relations have been gradually improving and that consulates were opened in Moscow and Tel Aviv in January.

Although the Soviets were the leading arms supplier to Iraq, Matousov said Moscow wants not only to stop the "arms supply to this very hot region of the world," but also to reduce existing arms, especially weapons of mass destruction.

But Matousov rejected the suggestion that Moscow would break relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization and its leader, Yasir Arafat, because of their support for Saddam Hussein. He said countries such as Yemen and Jordan have supported Hussein, and there is no question of breaking relations with them.

Matousov said the Soviet Union, like the United States, opposes Jewish settlement in the West Bank, which "we consider Palestinian soil."

But he rejected Arab criticism of the Soviet government for allowing so many Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel.

"Anyone who wants to leave the Soviet Union can decide where he is going," he said. "If he is going to Israel, it is not for the Soviet Union to judge."

DEPORTATION OF DUTCH JEWS RECALLED

By Henrietta Boas

AMSTERDAM, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and her husband, Prince Claus, attended the 50th anniversary commemoration here of the "February strike," a spontaneous protest by Amsterdam workers on Feb. 25-26, 1941, against the first deportations of Dutch Jews from Nazi-occupied Holland.

The annual ceremony Tuesday was the first since 1946 to be attended by members of the royal family. It was held in Jonas Daniel Meyer Square near the statue of the Stevedore, the dockworker who came to symbolize the strike.

The protest began at the initiative of the Communists after 425 young Amsterdam Jews, seized arbitrarily in reprisal for an attack on Dutch Nazis, were deported to concentration camps. All perished within months at Mauthausen.

COURT HEARING KLINGHOFFER SUIT TO CONSIDER WHETHER PLO IS STATE

By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- The 1988 declaration of statehood by the Palestine Liberation Organization is one of the main points of contention in a civil suit filed here that calls on the PLO to pay damages for the brutal murder of an elderly Jewish man by Palestinian terrorists five-and-a-half years ago.

Relatives of Leon Klinghoffer, the 69-year-old wheelchair-bound man shot and thrown into the Mediterranean during the October 1985 hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship, are trying to sue the PLO for an unspecified amount of money.

But the PLO maintains it cannot be sued, citing a 1976 U.S. law that makes sovereign states immune from such lawsuits. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit will have to decide whether the PLO's 2-year-old self-declared state of "Palestine" is indeed a sovereign nation.

A lower court already ruled that the PLO should be denied immunity, but the PLO, represented by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, has appealed.

In a friend-of-the-court brief, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith called the PLO a terrorist organization and said such groups do not deserve the legal protections offered to foreign governments.

"The PLO does not have the fundamental legal attributes of a state, including a defined territory, a functioning government that controls a territory, or a permanent population," said the ADL brief, which was filed Wednesday.

It said the PLO could not claim immunity based on its status at the United Nations, because it has observer status and is not recognized as a member state.

Case Could Set Important Precedent

Steven Freeman, director of the ADL's legal affairs department, said the case had wide-ranging implications for future prosecution of the PLO or any organization accused of terrorist activities.

"It would be significant if this established a precedent that the PLO can be sued here for violations of law in which Americans are victimized," said Freeman.

The Achille Lauro was hijacked while in Egyptian waters en route from Alexandria to Port Said. Four Palestinian terrorists, who panicked when their cache of weapons was discovered, changed their original plans to disembark in Israel and instead hijacked the ship.

After ordering the ship toward Syria -- where they eventually were not allowed to dock -- one of the gunmen shot Klinghoffer in the head and then had the body and wheelchair dumped into the sea.

The original operation was reportedly organized by a faction of the PLO, the Palestine Liberation Front, headed by Mohammed (Abul) Abbas, at the time aligned with Yasir Arafat.

The four hijackers, who finally turned over the ship at Port Said, in exchange for safe passage, were being taken to Tunisia aboard an Egyptian plane when U.S. fighter jets diverted the plane to a base in Italy.

Attempts to have the four extradited to the United States failed, and they were sentenced in 1986 by an Italian court to what were criticized by many as light sentences.

FEDERAL JUDGE MUST NOW DECIDE WHETHER TO DENATURALIZE EX-NAZI

By Leon Cohen

The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle

MILWAUKEE, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- A federal judge will have to decide whether the government has met "the heavy burden of proof" necessary to strip former Nazi concentration camp guard Anton Baumann of his U.S. citizenship.

The 79-year-old retiree from West Allis, Wis., who admitted membership in the notorious Waffen SS Death's Head Battalion during World War II, is accused of illegally concealing his service as a guard at the Stutthof and Buchenwald concentration camps when he applied for a U.S. visa in Salzburg, Austria, in 1950.

Judge Thomas Curran, who presided at Baumann's denaturalization hearing Jan. 2 to 4, asked both sides to submit final arguments in writing.

Three attorneys for the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations who are prosecuting the case presented their written arguments Feb. 19 after a Jan. 22 summation in court.

Their brief contains the testimony of two Stutthof survivors, Sam Israelski of Great Neck, N.Y., and Jan Szczepanski of Poland, and a former State Department visa analyst, Frank Walters of Silver Spring, Md.

Defense attorney David Cannon of Milwaukee has attempted to discredit the witnesses to substantiate his argument that the government failed to produce the quality of proof necessary to strip someone of "a right as valuable as citizenship."

According to OSI attorneys Susan Siegal, Betty Shave and Susan Masling, it was sufficient that Baumann was a concentration camp guard to have denied him a visa. They argued that Walters' testimony confirmed that "all concentration camp guards were per se ineligible for a visa" to enter the United States.

Testimony Of Survivors At Issue

The OSI document backed up Walters' testimony with the finding of the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1981 case of United States vs. Fedorenko, that "concentration camp guards were per se prohibited from entering the United States" under the Displaced Persons Act because they "acquiesced" and "assisted in the persecution" of civilians because of race, religion, national origin and political opinion.

Prior to the trial, Baumann identified a photo of himself in an SS uniform from a personnel file found in the Stutthof museum and archive.

His attorney contended that the testimony of the Stutthof survivors "adds nothing to the particular case."

He argued that Walters "provided no substantive testimony" for the government's case because he did not work in Salzburg when Baumann applied there for a visa.

He thus did not know "what actually transpired in the processing at that location during the years in question," Cannon wrote.

But the OSI attorneys contended that the two Stutthof survivors corroborated "documentary evidence regarding the role of the guards at Stutthof in ensuring the operation of the camp and the persecution of prisoners."

Curran's clerk, Teresa McLaughlin, gave no indication when the judge would reach or announce his decision.