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PRO-ISRAEL FORCES READY TO FIGHT ANY SALE OF F-15s TO SAUDI ARABIA

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, April 9 (JTA) -- The pro-Israel community, still smarting from a bruising battle with the Bush administration over loan guarantees, has put the White House on notice that it will fight any attempt to sell Saudi Arabia 72 advanced F-15 fighter planes this year.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said such a sale, valued around \$5 billion, would be "destabilizing" to a degree not equaled by past U.S. sales to Saudi Arabia.

"We intend to fight anything that shifts the balance further against Israel," said Hoenlein, who also urged the administration to try to deter a \$34 billion British arms sale to the Saudis announced this week.

Similarly, Jess Hordes, Washington representative of the Anti-Defamation League, said, "The pro-Israel community would work hard to oppose that kind of a sale."

The first salvo in that battle came Thursday, when 237 members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to President Bush expressing concern about any such sale. Bush received a similar letter from 67 senators last year, when talk of an F-15s sale first surfaced.

The F-15s were included on a Bush administration list of possible arms sales that was sent to Congress in January. In February, the Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, requested the planes in a letter to U.S. Ambassador Charles Freeman in Saudi Arabia.

McDonnell Douglas Lobbying Hard

While the administration has not yet notified Congress even informally of plans to sell the Saudis the F-15s, momentum for such a sale has picked up in recent weeks.

In particular, the St. Louis-based McDonnell Douglas Corp., which makes the F-15s, has mounted an aggressive lobbying campaign, arguing that such a sale would create thousands of jobs to help the ailing U.S. economy.

But a pro-Israel lobbyist said the Bush administration would have to receive a more definitive request from Saudi King Fahd before it would consider sending the proposal to Congress, which can block arms sales with a two-thirds vote in both chambers.

The administration reportedly is trying to dissuade Fahd from making the request, in order to avoid a fight with Congress while both the U.S. election campaign and the Middle East peace process are in full swing.

But should Fahd decide to go ahead with a more formal request, the administration would not "want to say no to Saudi Arabia," the pro-Israel lobbyist said.

Unlike the Royal Saudi Air Force, Fahd is "not convinced these are really needed for the defense of Saudi Arabia," the lobbyist said.

While the Saudi air force is used to having the "shiniest toys" to defend the kingdom, Fahd does not see their need in the absence of a significant threat from Iraq or Iran, the lobbyist said.

The administration said recently that an arms proposal for the Saudis is "not imminent."

That was unusual, insofar as the administration usually does not comment on the timing of future arms sales. The government appears to be particularly sensitive now given the evolving peace process begun last October.

Hoenlein said it would be ludicrous to go forward with such a sale when multilateral talks on Middle East arms control are slated to begin in Washington on May 11.

'Incompatible' With Arms Control

Any U.S. sale to Saudi Arabia would "undermine U.S. diplomacy and pressure for restraint" on the part of countries in Eastern Europe that have been leading arms producers in the past, the pro-Israel lobbyist said.

The administration has been trying to persuade these formerly Communist countries to abandon or at least scale down arms sales to the Middle East and other regions.

"The sale of additional F-15 aircraft to Saudi Arabia is incompatible with any meaningful arms control policy," the members of Congress said in their letter Thursday to Bush. Such a sale would represent "a significant escalation of the regional arms race," they said.

The letter, spearheaded by Rep. Mel Levine (D-Calif.), may have been motivated in part by a desire on the part of some lawmakers to "show their colors" for Israel after Congress failed to win loan guarantees for Jewish state on terms it found acceptable.

Another such show of support came Thursday when Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and nine colleagues wrote to Secretary of States James Baker urging him to withhold \$77 million in aid earmarked for Jordan this year.

They contended it would be "an unconscionable act" to provide the aid when Jordan violated the U.N. embargo against Iraq by providing "weapons and supplies" during and after the Persian Gulf War.

Jewish groups have generally not tried to block aid to Jordan out of fear of destabilizing King Hussein, whom Israel considers a better neighbor than other potential Jordanian rulers.

Hoenlein said D'Amato's letter "reflects the mood in Congress of anger and frustration at the administration's actions" during the fight for loan guarantees.

Will Jobs Issue Be Used?

Some pro-Israel sources suggested that the administration's refusal to support the loan guarantees would make it difficult for the White House to use the jobs issue as a means of attracting congressional support for the F-15s sale.

Pro-Israel activists argued to no avail that the loan guarantees would have created thousands of jobs in the U.S. housing industry, since part of the \$10 billion in loan money would have been used to purchase housing for immigrants from the former Soviet republics.

In a meeting with McDonnell Douglas officials last week, Hoenlein said he argued that the loan guarantees would have created more jobs than a sale of 72 F-15s to Saudi Arabia.

McDonnell Douglas' lobbying literature

argues that 40,000 U.S. defense jobs would be at stake in the Saudi sale.

But Amnon Neubach, the Israeli economics minister in Washington, said U.S. economists estimate that the loan guarantees would have created 40,000 new jobs in the United States.

The possible sale to the Saudis also come under fire recently from a 24-member coalition of U.S. religious, public interest and peace groups.

The coalition sent a letter to all members of the Senate and House accusing the administration of fostering "arms races in precarious regions."

The only Jewish group signing the letter was the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

NEWS ANALYSIS:

ARAFAT'S BRUSH WITH DEATH CONFIRMS HE IS A SURVIVOR WITH NO SUCCESSOR

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 9 (JTA) -- Yasir Arafat's 13-hour disappearance this week has taught some sobering lessons.

It made clear that the 62-year-old Palestine Liberation Organization chairman is indeed the indisputable leader of the Palestinian people.

It also showed that far too much authority and prestige has been vested in his person, with no adequate political apparatus to fill the gap should he suddenly depart.

Had Arafat not survived the crash landing of his plane in the Libyan desert Tuesday, the leaderless PLO would have been thrown into a bitter struggle for succession.

More ominous, especially from Israel's point of view, would have been the fate of the precarious Middle East peace process.

For all of his deviousness, ambiguity and evasive tactics, Arafat has been the shield behind which a Palestinian delegation has been able to engage in dialogue with Israel since last October.

That is because of his grip on the hearts and minds of Palestinians in both the administered territories and the so-called diaspora.

There are powerful forces arrayed against the peace talks with Israel, within as well as outside the PLO.

The external threats come chiefly from the growing popularity of the Moslem fundamentalists, represented by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.

Secular radicals, such as George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Nayef Hawatmeh of the Democratic Front, advocate armed struggle against Israel from under the PLO umbrella.

Even Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO's political department, opposes the peace process, but he defers to Arafat.

Without Arafat's support, the local leaders of the Palestinian peace camp -- Faisal Hussein, Sari Nusseibeh and Hanan Ashrawi -- probably could not keep the negotiations alive.

Arafat's death would have plunged the PLO into a bitter, probably violent power struggle.

There is no heir apparent to Arafat. His former top lieutenants, Khalil al-Wazir (known as Abu Jihad) and Salah Khalaf (known as Abu Iyyad) have been killed, probably by the Israelis.

The second echelon, including Kaddoumi and lesser known figures such as Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Khaled al-Hassan, are not attractive alternatives.

The incident has also proven once again that Arafat has a remarkable knack for surviving even

crises beyond his control. Nevertheless, reports from Libya on Thursday indicated that Arafat may have suffered more serious injuries than the scrapes and bruises for which he was hospitalized.

The PLO leader may now be more aware of his own mortality. He may realize that if he wants his political line to dominate the Palestinian nationalist movement in the future, he had better start grooming his successors.

ALLEGED ISRAELI SPY LOSES APPEAL FOR AUSTRALIAN HAVEN

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, April 9 (JTA) -- Ari Ben-Menashe, an Israeli who claims he would be prosecuted if forced to return to Israel, has lost his appeal for refugee status in Australia.

But some opposition politicians say the ruling Labor Party is trying to get rid of him because of possible embarrassing revelations.

Ben-Menashe, 40, gained notoriety after claiming on national television here last year that he paid a \$6.2 million bribe to a political party to use Western Australian port facilities for secret weapons shipments bound for Iran.

Ben-Menashe also said he could corroborate the so-called "October Surprise," the allegation that Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan and his running-mate, George Bush, promised arms shipments to Iran in 1980 if it would delay the release of U.S. Embassy personnel held hostage in Teheran until after Reagan's election.

Investigations have proved Ben-Menashe's claims of bribery and gun-running in Western Australia to be false, but not before the self-proclaimed Israeli spy had high-level meetings with federal politicians and repeated his charges to a Royal Commission investigating corruption in Western Australia.

Sen. John Coulter, leader of the opposition Australian Democratic Party, suggested that Ben-Menashe is being "deported" because it would "spare the Labor Party a scandal."

According to Coulter, Ben-Menashe, whose visa expires April 18, could face "a risk similar" to Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli nuclear technician serving a life sentence for revealing Israel's nuclear weapons capabilities.

The Immigration Department refuses to comment on Ben-Menashe's case.

But Ben-Menashe says he hopes to return to Australia on a tourist visa later this year to launch his book, "Profits of War," which he promises will contain further evidence of bribery and corruption.

DELTA SUES TO FLY ON SHABBAT

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 9 (JTA) -- Israel's High Court of Justice has ordered Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to show cause why he will not permit Delta Airlines, one of the largest U.S. carriers, to continue flights to Israel on the Sabbath.

The order Thursday was directed to Shamir in his official capacity as minister of labor and welfare. De facto control of the ministry is in the hands of Knesset member Menachem Porush of the Orthodox Agudat Yisrael party.

The issue is an attempt by the ministry to further reduce the number of airport employees permitted to work at Ben-Gurion Airport on Saturdays.

ROCKET SCIENTIST WITH NAZI PAST STILL TRYING TO CLEAR HIS NAME

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, April 9 (JTA) -- Arthur Rudolph, the Nazi scientist who helped develop the V-2 rocket and later the rocket that sent American astronauts to the moon, wants to clear his name, if not his conscience.

His lawyer, Barbara Kulaszka, was in the Federal Court of Canada here this week to appeal the Canadian Immigration Department's decision last year to bar his admission to the country on the grounds that he is a suspected war criminal.

Rudolph himself remained in Hamburg, Germany, where he has lived since 1984, after cutting a deal with the U.S. Justice Department. Rather than face prosecution by the department's Office of Special Investigations, he agreed to depart the United States permanently and to relinquish the American citizenship he obtained in 1954.

The OSI agreed not to contest continuation of his American pension of \$50,000 per year.

Now 85 years old, Rudolph wants to regain his U.S. citizenship, claiming he forfeited it under duress. His arrival here without a visa on a July 1, 1990 Lufthansa flight from Germany was part of a well-organized campaign by Friends of Arthur Rudolph, an organization based in Huntsville, Ala., where he worked at NASA's Space Center.

His only daughter, Marianne, 55, who is a graphic artist for NASA in San Jose, Calif., is also active in the campaign.

Rudolph and Kulaszka face stiff opposition from Crown Prosecutor Charlotte Bell of the Canadian Justice Department's war crimes unit.

On Jan. 31, B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights was granted intervenor status in the appeal. The organization, whose membership includes many Holocaust survivors and their children, meets the criteria of being a genuinely interested party that possesses "special knowledge and expertise" to assist the court, Justice Arthur Stone ruled.

'Abetted Kidnapping Of Slave Labor'

On Monday, Canadian war crimes prosecution advocate Ken Narvey was also granted leave to make oral and written submissions to assist the court.

In a 21-page finding issued Jan. 11, 1991, Immigration Department adjudicator William Wilmoughby ruled there are reasonable grounds to believe that Rudolph aided and abetted war crimes and crimes against humanity by his use of slave labor at the Mittelwerk rocket works in Nordhausen Germany, a series of gigantic tunnels carved into the Harz Mountains in Saxony.

The 60,000 prisoners who toiled at the Nazis' supersonic weapons complex came from the nearby Dora concentration camp. Among them were Frenchmen, Belgians, Czechs, Poles and Russians.

At least 20,000 died of starvation, brutality, disease or execution during the course of the project, which started in August 1943 and ended with the factory's liberation by American troops on April 11, 1945.

"The man aided and abetted kidnapping of slave labor," explains Donald MacIntosh, the Canadian Justice Department lawyer who prosecuted Rudolph on behalf of the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Kulaszka, of Brighton, Ontario, has a reputation as a lawyer for right-wing extremists. Together with Doug Christie of Victoria, British

Columbia, she co-defended alleged Hungarian war criminal Imre Finta of Toronto, who was acquitted in May 1990 after a sensational eight-month trial.

That year, Kulaszka unsuccessfully sought an injunction to compel the University of Toronto to rent a hall to Holocaust-denier David Irving.

LITHUANIAN WAR EYEWITNESSES REFUSE TO TESTIFY IN NAZI CASES

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, April 9 (JTA) -- The demise of the Soviet Union is thwarting efforts to bring suspected Nazi war criminals to justice in Australia, a war crimes investigator has charged.

More than 12 cases against alleged war criminals living in Australia have had to be abandoned because Lithuanian witnesses have refused to cooperate with Australian investigators, according to Graham Blewitt, director of the Special Investigations Unit assigned to gather evidence against Australian residents accused of war crimes.

The unit was investigating a number of cases involving Lithuanian murder squads during the Nazi occupation. Blewitt said they would have led to a dozen trials, in addition to the three cases currently before the courts.

But "numerous witnesses have reversed their decisions to testify since Lithuania seceded from the Soviet Union," he explained. The result is that only one person is expected to be charged before the unit's operations are shut down in June.

Changes in the Eastern European countries in general have confronted investigators with difficulties, especially where former Nazis have been rehabilitated as "anti-Communists," Blewitt said.

He disclosed that he has lodged a formal protest with the director of public prosecutions over the poor translation of evidence in the case of Ukrainian-born Ivan Polyukhovich, a suspected war criminal on trial in Adelaide, South Australia.

He is accused of personally murdering 24 individuals and complicity in the murders of 850 others.

The proceedings have been delayed while witnesses argued with the court translator over the description of a weapon used by Polyukhovich.

In contrast, when a witness was asked in English if he had been forced to wear a yellow star, the translator, repeating the question in Hebrew, asked if he had been wearing a "green sign."

INDICTMENTS SOUGHT FOR VICHY OFFICIALS

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, April 9 (JTA) -- The District Attorney's Office in Bordeaux has asked the Court of Appeals to indict two former officials of the Vichy regime involved in the deportation of Jews during World War II.

Maurice Papon and Rene Bousquet, both 82, would be tried for crimes against humanity, the same charge of which the late former Gestapo chief in Lyon, Klaus Barbie, was convicted.

The court has not set a date for its reply.

Papon was secretary-general of the Vichy administration in the Bordeaux region of southwestern France. He complied with orders from Bousquet, chief of the Vichy police, to arrest and deport the Jews of Bordeaux and the surrounding area.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
THE CARS NEW OLIM RUSHED TO BUY
ARE NOW GETTING THEM INTO A RUT**
By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, April 9 (JTA) -- Last month, Shaul Kotlarsky bought a Subaru Justy, all the while realizing he might not have enough money to maintain it. This month, he is wondering how to keep up the payments while still paying the rent and feeding his family.

Kotlarsky, like many new immigrants from non-Western countries, felt compelled to buy a car by March 31 -- the day the government was to end tax breaks on car purchases by olim from distressed countries.

At the beginning of the year, the government announced that it would give each immigrant a currency basket equivalent to some \$2,500 with which to set up a household, and do away with tax benefits for the purchase of appliances and automobiles. (Rights for immigrants from Western nations were unaffected.)

Just after signing on the dotted line, Kotlarsky learned that the government had changed its mind again, this time to extend the deadline on car purchases until Dec. 31.

For Kotlarsky and many of the 20,000 other new immigrants who rushed to buy cars in the first three months of 1992, the outcome could be financial ruin.

Even with their one-time car rights, which spare immigrants the 100 percent purchase tax all Israelis must pay when buying an automobile, few olim have enough cash to purchase a car outright. While most go to banks to secure loans, there have also been widespread reports of olim turning to loan sharks for money.

The Customs and Tax Authority has launched an investigation into the matter.

'A Lot Of Unfortunate Suffering'

Debra Lipson, spokeswoman for the Zionist Forum, an advocacy group for olim from the former Soviet republics, said that the March 31 deadline had caused "a lot of unfortunate suffering. Immigrants have gone into catastrophic debt in order to buy a car which, had there been no deadline, they would not have purchased at this time.

"They believed that if they did not buy a car now, they would never again have the opportunity to do so. Now they are left with a car they cannot afford to keep, and in many instances can't afford to repay," she said.

Just why the government decided to extend the deadline until the end of the year is up for debate, but most agree that the coming elections are the key factor. As one politician put it recently, "The Likud doesn't need a couple of hundred thousand angry olim, come Election Day."

Ellie Wurtman, a spokesman for the new immigrant political party Da, said, "While we consider the postponement an important step forward, we question the political motivations."

Lipson called it "cynical electioneering."

For new car owner Kotlarsky, the debate is now irrelevant. "True, I would have waited a year to buy the car," he admitted, "and I'm very worried about the car payments. We'll have to keep our other expenses down."

A moment later, the worry lines disappeared. "As bad as things are financially," he said, "we've taken some day trips to see the country. It's fun to have a car."

**SACRED MUSIC FILLS THE AIR
AT NEGLECTED SHUL IN KRAKOW**
By Marta Halpert

KRAKOW, Poland (JTA) -- Still bearing the dust and grime of decades of neglect, the 36 stained glass windows of the 130-year-old Postepowa, or Temple Synagogue, somehow seemed to glow to the poignant strains of Arnold Schonberg's "Survivor from Warsaw" and Leonard Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms."

Those were the selections of American-Jewish maestro Gilbert Levine, who conducted the Krakow Philharmonic Orchestra at a special concert Sunday in the only 19th-century synagogue still intact in Poland.

The program began with the Krakow Festival Choir singing the "Shma Yisrael."

The concert, attended by 400 guests from Poland, France, England, Belgium, Austria and the United States, was organized by the Jewish Heritage Council, a subdivision of the World Monuments Fund.

It was sponsored by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw to draw world attention to the deteriorated condition of the historic place of worship in this southern Polish city on the banks of the Vistula.

The program was dedicated to the memory of those who once worshipped here and to honor the few who still do. There are no more than 200 Jews in Krakow, compared to a pre-Holocaust population of 60,000.

There are few more graphic musical representations of the Holocaust than Schonberg's "Survivor from Warsaw," Levine said. It was narrated at the concert by an actual survivor, Jack Eisner.

Brought Tears To The Eyes

Many listeners felt shivers as the tender voice of alto soloist Jeremy Glazier, a 12-year-old from Toronto, filled the synagogue with his "Adonai" from the "Chichester Psalms."

It brought tears to the eyes of Czeslaw Jakubowicz, leader of the tiny Jewish community, who was seated next to Polish dignitaries.

According to Ronald Lauder, a former U.S. ambassador to Austria who is president of the foundation that bears his name, the concert had a twofold purpose.

"We want people to become aware of the significance and beauty of the synagogue and to understand its pressing need for preservation.

"We also want to demonstrate how the building can be used by both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of Krakow to enhance the city's cultural and religious life," Lauder said.

Samuel Gruber, director of the Jewish Heritage Fund, said the restoration and preservation of the synagogue would cost an estimated \$300,000.

The Temple Synagogue, completed in 1862, became the center of Progressive Judaism in Poland. Before World War II, its membership included leading businessmen, industrialists, bankers, writers and musicians.

During the Nazi occupation of Poland, it was stripped of its furnishings and ritual objects and used as a stable. But the essential structure survived intact, including the frescoed ceiling.

The building was returned to Krakow's surviving Jews after the war. But its large size made maintenance too costly for the remnant community, and it fell into disrepair.