



**CLINTON BACKING FOR F-15 SALE
DISTURBS PRO-ISRAEL COMMUNITY**

**By Cynthia Mann
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton's qualified support for a prospective U.S. sale of advanced fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia has stirred concern in some Jewish quarters.

The Democratic presidential nominee told a town meeting in Dallas last week he would support the proposed sale of 72 F-15 fighter jets as long as it did not erode Israel's qualitative military edge.

Asked if he would back the proposed sale, Clinton said, "I would, under the right circumstances."

"I believe that we now are in a position, given the present state of the peace talks in the Middle East, to conclude an agreement with Saudi Arabia which the Israelis can live with, which sells an F-15 technology that does not present a serious threat to Israel," he said.

"Our commitment to Israel, and it's a very important commitment, is not to do anything which alters the qualitative balance of power in the Middle East," he added.

The remarks angered some pro-Israel activists, who suggested Clinton had changed his previous posture on the sale in response to pressure from defense workers whose jobs are on the line.

Some also said the comments would make it easier for the Bush administration to go forward with the sale, which they fear will threaten Israel's security.

'Something Is Imminent'

In the city where the McDonnell Douglas Corp., which manufactures the jets, is based, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch ventured that Clinton's comments could "boost the possibility" that President Bush will formally propose the sale, which has been rumored for months.

The Dallas statement "appears to go beyond what (Clinton) has said in the past, and we remain concerned about the impact of 72 F-15s on Israel's qualitative military edge," said a spokesperson from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

And the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was scheduling a meeting this week to discuss the implications of such a sale for Israel.

But Malcolm Hoenlein, the umbrella group's executive director, said the meeting had nothing to do with the Arkansas governor's remarks. He said it was called because of the sense that "something is imminent, and we want to be prepared."

The Bush administration, under intense political pressure from the defense industry, reportedly has been poised to go forward with the \$5 billion sale, which Congress would have 30 days to block once it had been formally notified.

Requested by the Saudis early this year, the sale has been delayed by the fragility of the Middle East peace talks and heavy congressional opposition.

But the peace talks now appear to be on

track and congressional opposition has waned in the wake of a Capitol Hill lobbying campaign that has pitched the sale as a virtual jobs preservation program.

The closer it gets to the election, the more it looks like the pitch is working, and the sale could be a done deal whenever Congress receives formal notification.

Already A Fait Accompli?

Insiders now say the notification could come as early as next week and the administration may even seek a shorter-than-normal congressional consultation period, which could trigger outcries by pro-Israel lawmakers.

The sale's prospects are buoyed by the fact that Sen. Christopher (Kip) Bond (R-Mo.) and House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) are key backers of the sale and are from a state key to the presidential election.

The Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv on Monday quoted the congressional liaison at the Israeli Embassy here as saying Israel considered the sale a fait accompli. It said Israel would attempt to extract as a quid pro quo a pledge from Saudi Arabia to end the Arab boycott against Israel.

Until recently, Clinton had maintained a low profile on the subject, saying he would have to consult with his advisers on the specifics before taking a position.

In a phone interview two weeks ago with members of the Jewish press, he was only slightly more specific, but his emphasis clearly differed from his subsequent remarks in Dallas.

"I feel strongly that we can't do anything that undermines the qualitative military edge Israel enjoys in the Middle East," he told the Jewish reporters.

He said any sale would have to be evaluated in that light after consultation with his advisers and other parties that might be affected by the sale.

"This issue in particular depends on what kind of planes they're talking about selling," he said at the time.

Clinton also said he hoped the United States would in the long run be a "major force in demilitarizing the Middle East, not only in terms of weapons of mass destruction, but also in terms of traditional military weapons."

Some critics charge his apparent willingness now to sign off on an F-15 sale flies in the face of that stated long-term goal.

Clinton 'Remarkably Consistent'

But Marc Ginsberg, deputy press secretary for the Clinton campaign, defended Clinton's position. "Gov. Clinton believes the United States has important security agreements with Saudi Arabia that require continued U.S. support," he said.

"He does not believe it is inconsistent to provide Saudi Arabia with the military assistance to defend itself, particularly against the threat of Iraqi aggression, so long as that assistance does not undermine Israel's security."

And Lewis Roth, spokesman for the National Jewish Democratic Council, had no problem with Clinton's remarks in Dallas.

"Clinton has been remarkably consistent in

saying he would never do anything to undermine Israel's qualitative advantage over the Arab states," he said.

"Beyond that," he added, "he has put forward ideas in his economic plan to reduce the need of American defense companies to seek such destabilizing sales in the future."

Robert Freedman, political science professor at Baltimore Hebrew University and a board member of Americans for Peace Now, said the Clinton comments could be dismissed as "overtly political."

He also said it is unfair to accuse Clinton of triggering the sale. "The Bush administration was the one after the Gulf war that led the league in selling massive arms sales to the Saudis, so (critics) can't fault Clinton," he said.

But he said there actually are legitimate strategic rationales for the sale.

The sale would help "pre-position" weaponry in Saudi Arabia the United States could use in the event of another major conflict in the Persian Gulf, said Freedman, and therefore could be justified on national security grounds.

It also would help balance the threat from the Iranian acquisition of weapons from the former Soviet Union and could help deter further Iraqi ground attacks, he said.

He said he does not believe Saudi Arabia is the "avowed enemy of Israel" it once was.

RABIN QUESTIONS SYRIAN SERIOUSNESS ABOUT REACHING A PEACE SETTLEMENT By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- One week into the latest round of Middle East peace talks, Israel's new government is already questioning Syria's commitment to the process.

"I am not convinced that Syria is ready for a full-fledged peace agreement with us," Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told participants in the United Jewish Appeal Prime Minister's Mission here Sunday.

"We still have to see how far Syria has changed its previous position, and not only vis-a-vis the United States," he said.

"This government is resolved not to repeat with Syria the precedent of the Likud government in its 1978 agreement with Egypt, whereby it returned every square inch of Egyptian soil occupied in the Six-Day War of 1967," he asserted.

Rabin's stern tone, which contrasted sharply with his otherwise conciliatory remarks, appeared an attempt to clarify -- and perhaps toughen-- his position on the Golan Heights.

The prime minister's statement last week that Israel "does not need to hold on to every inch of the Golan" caused a stir here and abroad.

Even those Israelis who favor territorial compromise in the West Bank and Gaza Strip seemed surprised by Rabin's apparent willingness to make concessions in the Golan, an area that has been considered vital to Israel's security.

'Ready For Serious Negotiations'

But Rabin reiterated his commitment to continuous negotiations in Washington with the various Arab parties. "We are ready for serious negotiations with the Palestinians, and this can only be achieved in a continuous framework," he said.

Though the government had made and would continue to make concessions toward peace, Rabin said, "we are talking about an interim agreement,

not the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

"Jerusalem will remain our capital, under our sovereignty," he vowed.

The prime minister said the Persian Gulf War had given the country some much-needed breathing space, militarily speaking.

"Thanks to the Gulf war, which knocked out much of Iraq's military strength, and the further destruction of weapons by the U.N., the very existence of Israel is no longer threatened, at least for the next few years," he said.

"As a result, we have a window of opportunity of perhaps two to five years in which to solve our internal problems and seek out peace. There is no imminent military threat that can endanger Israel right now," he said.

The prime minister also touched on his meetings with President Bush three weeks ago at the president's vacation home in Maine. He spoke of the mutual understanding and respect that exists between Jerusalem and Washington.

"Israel and the U.S. have longstanding differences, going back through the terms of six American presidents, over the settlements in the territories, and over the price which Israel should pay for peace," he said.

"I didn't tell the president to change his position, as I didn't change mine," he said. "Yet we agree to disagree on such issues.

"At the same time," he added, "we agree about what our two countries have to do together. Our object is to maintain close and intimate cooperation with the U.S."

Asks U.S. Jews To Lobby Congress

During his recent visit to Washington, Rabin said, "I told former Secretary of State (James) Baker that we could not prevent the completion of 11,000 housing units in the territories. I told him, frankly, that there was a limit to my capabilities.

"Sometimes the basis for the creation of mutual trust and confidence is to tell one another unpleasant things," he said. "This, I believe, is the way Israel-U.S. relations should be conducted."

In what could be a partial reversal of remarks he made in the United States earlier this month, Rabin asked his American listeners to press Congress to approve a package of loan guarantees that Bush has approved in principle.

"There may be more problems with the Congress than there were with the administration," he said. "I hope the issue will not get stuck in legislation. But I have no doubt that the American Jewish community will help.

"I hope and believe that the Jewish community will work together to make sure that what has to be done will be done," he said.

During meetings in New York three weeks ago, Rabin reportedly criticized the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and other American Jewish groups from lobbying too stridently for the loan guarantees last fall.

He was also quoted as telling Jewish groups they should leave contacts with the administration on matters concerning Israel up to Jerusalem, rather than assuming responsibility themselves.

The Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, Sept. 7, because of the Labor Day holiday in the United States.

ISRAEL FREES NEARLY 200 ARABS, IN FIRST OF 800 TO BE RELEASED

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- As a gesture of good will to enhance the ongoing peace talks in Washington, Israel this week implemented measures to ease conditions for Palestinians in the administered territories.

Close to 200 Palestinians were freed Monday from the Ketziot detention camp in the Negev, the first of 600 prisoners scheduled for release over several days.

Altogether 800 Arabs are to be released from Ketziot and the Megiddo jail in the north, in line with a series of confidence-building measures timed by the government to coincide with the current round of Israeli-Arab peace talks.

Cheering Palestinians greeted released prisoners on Monday at the Erez checkpoint at the entrance to the Gaza Strip.

"The released prisoners were jailed for all violations except murder and manslaughter, and all had completed two-thirds of their terms," the Israel Defense Force spokeswoman said.

Some 10,000 detainees are in prison, she said.

At the same time, the IDF began unsealing streets and alleyways in the West Bank and Gaza Strip where barricades were put up to block intifada activists from attacking army patrols and civilian passersby.

In Bethlehem, small groups of residents watched as an army bulldozer pulled down the concrete-filled oil barrels which had barricaded part of central Manger Square over the past two years following repeated stone-throwing attacks there.

Col. Moshe Elad, Bethlehem military governor, said 30 barricades were dismantled Sunday and Monday in the Bethlehem area, which had been free of disturbances in the past few months.

Elad said more goodwill gestures would be made by the army if the relative quiet continued.

As the army carried out its goodwill measures, several terrorist attacks were reported.

A young Arab woman who tried to stab a civil defense guard at the entrance to the Western Wall in Jerusalem was seized and detained before she could hurt her intended victim.

An Israeli who accidentally drove into the Balata refugee camp near Nablus on the West Bank was slightly wounded after being shot in the leg. A resident of Herzliya, the man was rescued by border police. Security forces sealed off the area and searched for the attackers.

In the Gaza Strip, a 20-year-old man kidnapped at the end of last week by six masked assailants, who suspected him of cooperating with the Israeli authorities, was found strangled to death Sunday night, military sources said.

JORDAN ASKS ISRAEL FOR MORE WATER

TEL AVIV, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Jordan wants to reach an agreement with Israel on increasing the allocation of water it draws from the Yarmuk River, according to a report Monday in the Israeli daily Ma'ariv.

The paper said that Amman has asked Israel for a one-time gesture, and senior sources are quoted as having told Ma'ariv that the gesture will apparently be authorized.

The request was made by Munthir Haddadin, the senior Jordanian representative to the multi-

lateral talks on water resources, which were held in Vienna in May and are scheduled to resume sometime in September.

He requested authorization for an additional allocation of about 60 million to 70 million cubic meters of water from the Yarmuk River, a tributary of the Jordan River, over the course of one year. The amount would be above the current level, which was set in 1957.

Haddadin told his Israeli counterparts, led by Elyahu Rosenthal, that there is a great shortage of water in Amman and its environs.

The Israelis reportedly said they would consider a one-time gesture, but the Jordanian government has not yet been given a final answer.

LIKUD LAWMAKERS WON'T SEEK ACTION AGAINST LABORITE WHO MET WITH PLO

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Two members of Knesset from the Likud party have withdrawn their demand that Labor Knesset member Yael Dayan be stripped of her parliamentary immunity because of her recent meeting with a senior official of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Limor Livnat and Michael Eitan changed their minds Monday, after Dayan made a statement at a meeting of the Knesset House Committee in which she promised to refrain from further violating the Israeli law banning meetings with PLO officials until it is amended.

Eitan said that in view of Dayan's statement, he no longer sees a point in demanding an immunity waiver, which would enable her to be prosecuted for breaking the law.

The government of Yitzhak Rabin has announced that it intends to amend the law soon. Yet the prime minister reportedly expressed displeasure at the meeting, and Dayan said she was taking his disapproval into account in making her decision.

Dayan met in The Hague with Nabil Sha'ath, a key political adviser to PLO chief Yasir Arafat. She was accompanied by Knesset member Naomi Chazan of the Meretz bloc.

Chazan, a Hebrew University professor, is presently out of the country, and the demand to remove her immunity is still in effect.

As it stands, the Israeli law provides up to three years' imprisonment for "any Israeli citizen or resident who knowingly, and without authorization, has contact in Israel or abroad with a person who fills a function in the executive council or other similar body in a terrorist organization, or who serves as an official representative of a terrorist organization."

But meetings between members of Knesset and PLO officials have almost become a tradition.

In early August, a delegation of six Israeli Arabs, including a Knesset member, met with PLO officials in Tunis after saying they would not.

In 1989, controversy arose over a meeting Knesset member Arieh (Lova) Eliav of Labor had with PLO officials.

Many other meetings between Israelis and PLO officials have taken place in Eastern Europe.

And in December 1989, Rabin, then defense minister, said his ministry had authorized and paid for meetings between relatives of Israeli soldiers captured in Lebanon and PLO representatives.

In March 1989, Chazan conducted a survey on support for direct Israeli-PLO negotiations. More than 70 percent of Israeli women favored such talks, as did 50 percent of men.

BERLIN HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL BOMB LINKED TO ANTI-FOREIGNER RIOTS

By David Kantor

BONN, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Berlin's Jewish community on Monday condemned the bombing of a Holocaust memorial in the city and linked it to the wave of anti-immigrant rioting that escalated over the weekend in eastern Germany.

Community leaders said the Sunday night attack on the monument, which commemorates the spot where Jews were collected by the Nazis for deportation to concentration camps, has implications beyond the incident itself.

"A far greater damage than the attack on the memorial threatens to raise its head," the Jewish community said in a statement.

The person "who turns away apathetically should think of the results wrought by such behavior in Germany over 50 years ago," the community said.

Berlin Mayor Eberhard Diepgen said the attack on the memorial was part of an orchestrated neo-Nazi campaign. He spoke as police on Monday reinforced security around Jewish institutions in Berlin.

No one claimed responsibility for the blast, which tore away a heavy granite block supporting the memorial, situated along a bridge over railroad tracks in western Berlin's central Tiergarten district.

This was the most serious attack to date on the monument, which has been vandalized several times in the past. It was the first attack on a Jewish target during the current wave of neo-Nazi violence.

In Los Angeles, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said the bombing of the memorial and the growing neo-Nazi violence plaguing reunited Germany indicates the need for a mandatory nationwide curriculum on the Holocaust to be instituted in all German schools.

The bombing was also condemned in Washington by B'nai B'rith International, which called for "the strongest and clearest official German pronouncements, at every level of government, that racism and anti-Semitism will not be tolerated in the Germany of 1992."

WAGNER TOWN HAS INTERFAITH GROUP

By David Kantor

BONN, Aug. 30 (JTA) -- An association for Christian-Jewish cooperation has been established in Bayreuth, the Bavarian town known for its yearly festivals dedicated to the music of Richard Wagner, a German ultranationalist and anti-Semite.

In opening ceremonies for the new organization, no mention was made of Wagner or his music.

The 19th-century composer was known for his extreme anti-Semitic views, and his works were used by the Nazis to underscore their hatred toward Jews.

In the past five years, the town has become the site of violence by neo-Nazis commemorating the Aug. 15 anniversary of the death of Nazi leader Rudolf Hess.

The chairman of the Jewish community of Bayreuth, Josef Gothart, and a representative of the Protestant church both said that cooperation between the faiths is a necessity, not just something nice to do. The town's mayor said the establishment of the association was long overdue.

IDF ISSUES NEW CIVIL DEFENSE RULES AS FALSE ALARMS SOUND IN TEL AVIV

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Israelis, already jittery at the prospect of renewed hostilities with Iraq, got a jolt Monday night when air raid sirens sounded over Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan, areas that were hardest hit by Iraqi Scuds during the Persian Gulf War.

Worried citizens initially assumed the worst, but Israel Radio soon assured them that the incident was a "technical mishap."

But the episode took place against the backdrop of an announcement by Israel's Home Front Command of new civil defense procedures to deal with possible missile and gas attacks.

Announcing the amended rules Sunday, Home Front Commander Brig. Gen. Yishai Dotan said they bore no relation to the heightened tension in Iraq.

He reiterated the government's assessment that there was little chance of an Iraqi attack on Israel and said the new instructions were "advisory" and were not meant to be implemented at present.

"The feeling regarding the possibility of a new missile attack on Israel is that it is highly unlikely," he said.

"This is the kind of information that might come in handy to the public in the future, and not necessarily because of any recent developments," he added. "At the moment, the public is not required to take any special measures."

The new procedures increase from six to 10 the number of warning zones established at the start of the Gulf War.

The increased number will enable the Israel Defense Force to issue and cancel warnings of conventional or non-conventional attacks to smaller areas, forcing fewer citizens into shelters and gas masks.

Unlike during the Gulf War, from now on the public will not be required to don gas masks at the sound of an initial siren but need only take them into a sealed room and await a second siren.

The public was urged not to rush out now to buy masking tape or plastic sheeting to prepare sealed rooms but only to be ready to purchase them when necessary.

Gas masks and protective clothing issued last year and held in store by the public are still suitable, and older equipment nearing the end of useful life will be replaced gradually over the coming months, the Home Front Command said.

The timing of the announcement was criticized by Ha'aretz defense analyst Ze'ev Schiff, who said it stood in contrast to repeated government declarations of a low probability of attack by Iraq.

LEAH RABIN HAD CARDIAC DISTURBANCE

JERUSALEM, Aug. 31 (JTA) -- Leah Rabin, the wife of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, suffered a "cardiac disturbance" but not a full-fledged heart attack, her doctors said Monday.

Rabin was hospitalized Saturday after suffering severe chest pains while playing tennis with her husband.

She was rushed to Sheba Hospital of the Tel Hashomer government medical center, near Tel Aviv, and has been resting in the hospital's intensive care unit since Saturday.