

**CLINTON CLARIFIES POSITION ON F-15s
IN SPEECH COURTING THE JEWISH VOTE**

By Cynthia Mann

States News Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton used a speech to a major Jewish gathering here this week to clarify his stance on Saudi Arabia's request to purchase 72 advanced F-15 fighter aircraft from the United States.

The Democratic presidential nominee had come under fire from Jewish leaders for conditionally supporting Saudi Arabia's \$5 billion arms request, which is under serious consideration by the Bush administration.

But in a speech delivered via satellite Wednesday to B'nai B'rith's international convention here, Clinton assured supporters of Israel that he would only support such a sale if it would not tilt the region's military balance or erode Israel's qualitative military edge.

He also said he would urge the Saudis to end their economic boycott against Israel.

In the speech, which was broadcast from a community college outside Atlanta, the Arkansas governor pledged to safeguard Israel's security, give high priority to the Middle East peace talks, oppose a Palestinian state and provide strong leadership in the fight against racism and prejudice.

In doing so, he touched many of the same "buttons" on Israel that President Bush did in a speech delivered in person a day earlier to the same group.

The Bush campaign has tried to convince Jewish voters that Clinton's inexperience with foreign policy could jeopardize Israel's security and that the administration's pro-Israel record represents the best insurance policy for Israel.

Assails Bush's 'Callous Remarks'

But Clinton went beyond Bush to emphasize domestic issues, where the president is seen as out of step with the majority of Jewish voters.

He argued that a weakening American economy represents a danger to Israel. "We can't be strong abroad if we're not strong at home," he said.

The governor won a particularly warm response when he talked about the importance of a Supreme Court that respects "a woman's right to choose," the need for comprehensive education reform, and the importance of protecting the constitutional separation of church and state.

Bush supports prayer in the public schools and public funding for private schools, while Clinton and much of the Jewish community do not. The community is also overwhelmingly in favor of preserving a woman's right to opt for abortion, as is Clinton, while Bush would sharply restrict that right.

Clinton took a shot at Bush for what he called the "callous remarks" leveled last September against lobbyists seeking loan guarantees for Israel, whom the president implied were working against the national interest.

Clinton called the remarks "an affront to basic American rights."

"Patriotism is vocal," he said, adding: "I applaud your patriotism."

Bush tried to make amends Tuesday for that

incident, which markedly soured relations between the administration and organized American Jewry. He said his remarks had been misunderstood and he regretted the "pain" they had caused.

Clinton also said he was disturbed by the first two days of the Republican convention in Houston, which he said were divisive. He talked about the importance of the presidential bully pulpit in defusing tensions and divisions that are a "natural byproduct" of economic hard times.

Concerned About Arms Proliferation

The Democratic nominee told the B'nai B'rith audience that if elected, he would not alter the current course of the Middle East peace talks.

He said he had assured Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of his "strong commitment" to the talks and promised there would be "no hiatus in the current negotiations" if he is elected.

He implied he would be more aggressive than the Bush administration in prodding the Arabs to "reciprocate" the recent series of confidence-building measures taken by the Rabin government in the administered territories and Israel's acceptance of the idea that the "land for peace" formula contained in U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 applies to the Golan Heights.

He said "simple steps" should be taken to end the "economic warfare" being perpetrated against Israel through the Arab boycott.

And he chastised the administration for pressing Israel for unilateral concessions, pledging he would not do so.

Clinton also said he is concerned about the arms buildup in the Middle East. He said he would like to see an "aggressive effort" to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to reduce sales of conventional weapons in the region.

The B'nai B'rith delegates gave Clinton a standing ovation following his speech and again after the question-and-answer session.

But their enthusiastic response, despite the miles between them geographically, was not surprising. Some 70 percent of American Jewish voters sided with the Democrats in the last presidential election and an even higher percentage is expected to support Clinton in November.

**ISRAEL SHOULD EXHAUST ALL OPTIONS
FOR PEACE WITH SYRIA, RABIN DECLARES**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told a special session of Knesset that Israel should exhaust every possible option for a peace settlement with Syria.

Addressing a stormy meeting of the Israeli parliament on Wednesday, the prime minister defended his peace policy toward Syria, which has raised tremendous concerns among the settlers of the Golan Heights and Israelis whose homes are within shooting range of the strategic heights.

A parliamentary recess was interrupted to hold the extraordinary session at the request of the opposition, in light of the peace talks scheduled to reconvene in Washington next Monday.

In defending his policy, Rabin invoked the late Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

Speaking over frequent interruptions by

Likud hecklers, Rabin quoted Begin as having said that "nothing would stand" in Israel's way once Syrian President Hafez Assad declared he was ready to negotiate peace with Israel.

The prime minister referred to Israel's acceptance of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 as applying to talks with Syria.

The prime minister said no one could enter negotiations with Syria interpreting the resolutions as meaning only "peace for peace -- unless he is fooling himself."

Assad Wants 'Every Inch'

But Rabin said Syria should not make a precedent of Israel's return of the Sinai Desert in its entirety in exchange for peace with Egypt, a formula adopted by Syrian negotiators at the peace talks in Washington.

As he spoke, news reports from Damascus quoted Assad as saying Syria wants "every inch" of the Golan Heights returned as part of any peace pact with Israel.

Assad made his remarks to a visiting delegation of some 200 visiting Druse who live on the Golan Heights, which Israel captured during the 1967 Six-Day War. A considerable number of Druse on the Golan, who were Syrian citizens before the war, have expressed desires to be reunited with their brethren in Syria.

At the Knesset session, Likud speakers charged that Rabin was not briefing them on the precise state of the negotiations with Syria.

David Levy, the former foreign minister, said the Rabin government was "wrecking" the political process started by the Likud government in Madrid last October.

The Knesset struck down opposition motions for the agenda to debate the negotiations with Syria in the House.

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TAKES STEP TO ALLOWING MEETINGS WITH PLO By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- The government this week took another step toward granting legitimacy to the Palestine Liberation Organization when it authorized three Knesset members to participate in an international symposium that will also be attended by PLO activists.

The Foreign Ministry gave the go-ahead to three coalition members of Knesset to take part in a U.N.-sponsored seminar on Middle East peace in Portugal next week.

Labor's Avraham Burg and Nissim Zvilli and Meretz's Naomi Chazan are due to chair symposium committee sessions attended by senior PLO officials, including Nabil Sha'ath, a key political adviser to PLO chief Yasir Arafat, and Yasser Abed Rabbo, a member of the PLO's executive committee.

Approval came only two weeks after opposition members called for the lifting of parliamentary immunity from two Knesset members for meeting with Sha'ath in The Hague, Netherlands.

The request was withdrawn only after one of the members involved, Yael Dayan, promised a Knesset committee she would refrain from any further violation of the Israeli law banning meetings with PLO officials until it is amended.

The other member was Chazan, who made no such promise.

The government has announced it intends to lift the six-year ban on contacts between Israelis and the PLO and is now drafting an amendment

to the 1986 law forbidding contact with terrorist organizations.

Foreign Ministry approval of the Portugal trip was in line with a recent decision to withdraw objections to participation in such events as no longer having much point, and in which Israel might gain a public relations advantage.

BRITISH LEADER MEETS WITH PERES, AGREES TO LEAD ANTI-BOYCOTT DRIVE By Bernard Josephs and Joseph Mills London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- British Prime Minister John Major pledged this week to lead a European Community initiative to convince the Arab states to end their economic boycott against Israel.

Major made the promise Tuesday at an hour-long meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, whose visit here is expected to result in a dramatic boost in relations between Israel and the 12-nation E.C.

British officials described the three-day official visit as "splendid" and said it had helped create a new atmosphere. An Israeli diplomat said the results had exceeded expectations.

London is now expected to ask the E.C., which the United Kingdom currently chairs, to urge the Arabs to abandon the trade boycott of Israel, in response to Israel's decision to cut back on settlement activity in the territories.

In addition, Britain will press the E.C. to expand its trade with Israel.

While neither side would go into details, it was clear that some progress had been made even on the thorny issue of Britain's arms embargo against Israel, introduced during the 1982 war in Lebanon.

Prime Minister Major and Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said they would "look into it."

An Israeli official observed that this was a far cry from the negative response Israel had received whenever the matter was raised in the past.

British officials were particularly pleased with Peres' call for greater European participation in the Middle East peace talks.

At a news conference before leaving Wednesday, Peres said he felt strongly that Europe should play a bigger role in the multilateral phase of the negotiations, covering such regional issues as economic development and arms control.

While the foreign minister's remarks were largely rosy, he pointed out that Israel and Britain still have some differences. For one, Israel is strongly opposed to Western arms deals with Saudi Arabia, in which Britain is deeply involved.

Peres was not the only Israeli official in town this week. Israel's arms development agency, Rafael, was displaying its Popeye air-to-surface missile at the Farnborough Air Show in the hope that the Royal Air Force would buy it.

Rafael spokesman Noach Shachar told the London Jewish Chronicle that the RAF has solicited bids for that type of missile and that the Popeye answers "the air force's operational requirements."

He added: "We're very interested in selling the missile to the RAF. That is why we are here."

He also confirmed that the Popeye, which is in use with the Israeli and U.S. air forces, has drawn the attention of "many potential customers from a number of countries."

GERMANY, IN WAKE OF RACIST ATTACKS, PONDERS LAW TO CURB REFUGEE INFLUX

By David Kantor

BONN, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- Following the recent wave of anti-foreigner violence in Germany, the Bundestag will next month consider legislation curbing the right of asylum.

A proposed amendment to the constitution will limit the granting of refugee status to persons suffering political persecution and restrict access to so-called "economic refugees," a spokesman of the ruling Christian Democratic faction said Wednesday.

The uncontrolled influx of refugees is partially to blame for the attacks on refugee hostels in a number of cities, particularly in eastern Germany, he said.

Members of the opposition Social Democratic Party have said they are reconsidering their opposition to curbing immigration in the wake of rampages by far-right gangs.

Support for the change came Wednesday from Manfred Rommel, the mayor of Stuttgart and president of the National Organization of German Town Councils.

The son of a German World War II hero, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the Stuttgart mayor said many communities are unable to cope with the large numbers of economic refugees who claim asylum to win state support.

The speaker of the Bundestag, Rita Sussmuth, said this week that any change in the constitution would be directed at ensuring asylum for those persecuted for their political beliefs.

BAVARIA DENIES ERRING IN DESTROYING DOCUMENTS ON 1972 MUNICH MASSACRE

By David Kantor

BONN, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- The federal state of Bavaria this week denied any wrongdoing in destroying police documents on the failed rescue attempt of 11 Israeli athletes killed at the 1972 Munich Olympic games.

Relatives of the slain Israelis say there is evidence that nine of the Israelis were killed by bullets fired by German security police, and that files dealing with this matter had been destroyed.

But a spokesman of the Bavarian Justice Ministry said Wednesday the files were destroyed as "a routine matter," a claim made earlier this week by Bavarian Justice Minister Mathilde Berghofer-Weichner.

According to Berghofer-Weichner, relatives of the murdered athletes recently claimed compensation of 46 million marks, or some \$33 million.

High-ranking sources in the Bavarian government said they view the dispute over the documents as a fresh attempt to substantiate these claims for financial compensation.

The claims were made after a secret report was said to have been smuggled to Israel by a German who is sympathetic to Israel.

The Israeli athletes were seized at their apartment complex on Sept. 5, 1972 by Arab terrorists and taken to an airfield in the vicinity of Munich. From there, the Palestinians were promised that they and their hostages would be flown to Cairo.

Instead, West German security police opened fire at the terrorists. In the ensuing exchange of gunfire, all nine hostages, five of the Palestinians and one West German policeman were killed.

JUDGE SETS HEARING ON CHARGES OF MISCONDUCT IN DEMJANJUK CASE

By Judith A. Saks
The Observer

NASHVILLE, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- A special judge appointed by the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati has set Oct. 15 to begin hearings into possible misconduct by U.S. Justice Department officials in the 1986 extradition of John Demjanjuk to Israel.

After hearing testimony from four attorneys who previously represented the government in the Demjanjuk case, U.S. District Judge Thomas Wiseman Jr. will prepare a report on the denaturalization, deportation and extradition proceedings.

Demjanjuk, a former Cleveland autoworker, was stripped of his U.S. citizenship and extradited to Israel by the Cincinnati court on charges that he was "Ivan the Terrible," who tortured and beat prisoners on their way to the gas chambers at Treblinka. He has since been tried in Israel and sentenced to death.

However, new evidence has emerged, purporting to show that a man named Ivan Marchenko was in fact "Ivan the Terrible." The Israeli court is reviewing its verdict.

In a procedural hearing on Sept. 4, Wiseman overruled a request to limit the scope of testimony just to the extradition itself. "Any allegations of attorney misconduct in any proceeding" concerning Demjanjuk "may be explored" in the upcoming hearings, said Wiseman.

The four attorneys to be questioned are: Allan Ryan Jr., a former director of the Justice Department Office of Special Investigations, which prosecuted the case; attorneys Norman Moscovitz and George Parker, who worked at OSI; and John Horrigan, a former assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

The former director of OSI, Neil Sher, may also be called to testify.

"In essence these lawyers' reputations are on trial," said Dana Biehl, deputy chief of the Justice Department's Terrorism and Violent Crime Section. "It is essential to hear them." Biehl said each lawyer will likely be represented by a personal counsel.

Wiseman noted the lawyers' recollections are "going to be a problem because (the Demjanjuk extradition) took place so long ago."

ENVOY WARNS ABOUT ANTI-SEMITE

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- Israel's ambassador to Hungary said this week that the anti-Semitic views of a leading Hungarian lawmaker recalled the period of Adolf Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s.

Speaking at a ceremony honoring 19 Hungarians who helped save Jews during World War II, David Kraus condemned the views put forward by Istvan Csurka, deputy head of the country's ruling political party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum.

Csurka has openly criticized Jews, warning that the "dwarf minority" is threatening to take over Hungary. His views have been carried in Magyar Forum, the newspaper of the Democratic Forum, and in a regularly scheduled Sunday radio program.

Kraus spoke at a ceremony at the Budapest Jewish Community Center recognizing non-Jewish Hungarians who helped Jews during the Holocaust.

COURT RULINGS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WORRY LEGAL SCHOLARS, REPORT SHOWS

By Cynthia Mana
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- Recent federal court interpretations of the First Amendment seriously threaten U.S. constitutional protections of religious freedom, according to a new nationwide survey of top legal experts.

The survey was compiled in the first annual Report Card on Religious Freedom by the David Kahn Religious Liberty Resource Center, a project of the American Jewish Congress in Chicago.

"The results show a very disturbing trend of the courts to quietly erode many of our constitutionally protected religious liberties," said Sylvia M. Neil, the project director.

Neil said the trend makes it all the more important to pass pending legislation that codifies the religious liberty protections that have been eroded by the courts.

"Our goal is to educate the public on the impact court decisions have on their constitutional right to separation of church and state," said Allen Turner, chairman of the Kahn Center.

The Report Card is a vehicle to alert the public to the changing status of the protection of their religious liberties, he said.

Eighteen national legal experts on religious liberties were asked to evaluate and grade trends in judicial rulings in five areas within the protection of religious liberties.

The experts awarded their highest grade, B, based on a cumulative average, to the judicial protection of freedom from explicit government discrimination against individuals due to their religious beliefs.

The lowest grade, D, was given for court decisions affecting the freedom from indirect government burdens or restrictions on religious practices.

Smith Case Of Special Concern

Several of the experts cited the 1990 case of Employment Division vs. Smith as a reason for giving the courts such a low grade in this area.

The Smith case involved a dispute over whether Oregon could deny unemployment benefits to Native Americans who were fired from their jobs for using peyote during religious ceremonies.

The Oregon Supreme Court held that the First Amendment prohibited the denial of unemployment benefits on that basis.

But the U.S. Supreme Court reversed that decision and upset precedents that had prohibited the government from interfering with an individual's religious practice unless there was a "compelling interest" in doing so.

The Smith decision said the "compelling interest" standard was a "luxury," and that there would be no exceptions to generally applicable law to accommodate religious practices.

"I regard the Smith decision as a debacle, and a terrible portent of things to come," said Aviam Soifer, a professor at Boston University's School of Law. "Smith is in itself a sea change of extreme proportions."

It suggests "a particular bias against unpopular group religions."

The courts received a C in the other three areas surveyed: freedom from government promotion of religion, such as the display of religious symbols on public property; freedom from government inculcation of religion in public schools,

including organized prayer and religious songs; and freedom from government financial entanglement with religious institutions, including financial aid, tax credits and vouchers.

Neil said that passing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, pending in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, would be one important remedy to the current judicial trend. The measure aims to restore by law the requirement that the government demonstrate there is a compelling interest in interfering with the exercise of religious beliefs.

But sources on Capitol Hill say the legislation is unlikely to pass this year.

PRETRIAL HEARINGS BEGIN FOR YOUTH CHARGED WITH STABBING LUBAVITCHER

NEW YORK, Aug. 9 (JTA) -- Pretrial hearings began here Tuesday for the youth charged with stabbing Hasidic scholar Yankel Rosenbaum to death last summer during the riots in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighborhood.

Lemrick Nelson, 17, is the only one of a group of attackers who has been charged with Rosenbaum's death.

In the opening court procedure, a New York City police officer testified that on the night of Aug. 19, 1991, he saw 10 men punching and kicking Rosenbaum on the ground.

Rosenbaum died several hours later at the hospital with four stab wounds in his back, one of which went unnoticed by doctors.

Nelson's attorney, Arthur Lewis, argued before New York State Supreme Court Justice Edward Rappaport that his client was improperly arrested and that statements he made to police should not be allowed as evidence.

Lewis also argued that the bloodstained knife police found in Nelson's front pants pocket should not be admitted as evidence.

According to Lewis, Nelson was part of the group of as many as 20 men who attacked Rosenbaum, but he said his client did not stab him.

Rosenbaum was an Australian scholar who was visiting the Lubavitch community when racial tensions erupted after the accidental killing of a 7-year-old boy, Gavin Cato, by an out-of-control car belonging to the Lubavitcher rebbe's entourage.

The judge said that jury selection was to begin Wednesday and that he expects the trial to get under way by Sept. 21.

NATHAN IN U.S. TO RAISE SOMALIA FUNDS

JERUSALEM, Sept. 9 (JTA) -- Israeli peace activist Abie Nathan flew to the United States on Wednesday in an attempt to raise \$1 million to build a refugee tent city on the Somalian-Kenyan border.

During the visit, Nathan expects to meet with leaders of American Jewish organizations. He expressed hope that the Americans will use their expertise in fund-raising for the cause.

Nathan just returned from Kenya, where he met with high-ranking government officials. "I spoke to the Somali spokesman, who will inform me within a couple of days whether we have permission to set up the camp," he said.

Nathan's American trip follows a largely unsuccessful bid to raise money in Israel. In the two weeks since Magen David Adom began its fund-raising campaign, only 38,000 shekels, or \$16,000, has been contributed by the public.