

**GROUPS UPSET OVER F-15 SALE,  
BUT ELATED OVER LOAN PACKAGE****By Cynthia Mann  
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 13 (JTA) -- President Bush's decision to sell advanced F-15 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia has dismayed supporters of Israel, who are concerned it will alter the military balance in the Middle East.

But their disappointment has been mitigated by the favorable terms of a loan guarantee package for Israel that the president submitted to Congress on Friday, the same day he announced the F-15 sale.

Jewish organizational leaders say they are deeply concerned about the proposed \$9 billion sale to the Saudis. But it is unlikely they will mount a major fight against it, given Bush's assurances that he will protect Israel's qualitative military edge and Israel's declaration that it will not oppose the sale.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli government did issue a statement Sunday saying it was displeased with the deal, arguing it would escalate the arms race in the region and benefit a country in a state of belligerency with Israel.

Advocates of Israel here said they eagerly awaited the details of the U.S. commitment to offset the sale's impact on Israel, noting close consultations last week between the Pentagon and Israeli officials, reportedly on upgrading military cooperation between the two countries.

Meanwhile, they hailed the loan guarantee package and, with it, the close of a particularly bitter chapter in the relations between the Jewish community and the administration, which had squared off over the terms of the deal.

Both the loan guarantee initiative and the F-15 sale are expected to clear Congress, though three members of the House of Representatives said Friday that they planned to introduce legislation to oppose the arms sale.

A two-thirds majority in the House and the Senate would be needed to block the sale within 30 days of formal notification, which was anticipated Monday.

**Scored At 4.5 Percent**

The loan package calls for the United States to provide Israel with guarantees for \$10 billion in loans over five years to aid the absorption of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Its most important feature is that it allows Israel to bear the full cost of underwriting the guarantees, thereby eliminating the objection voiced by some lawmakers that it would burden U.S. taxpayers at a time when the domestic economy is sorely strained.

The bill would do this by requiring only 4.5 percent of the value of the package be set aside to cover possible default, a cost substantially lower than the 7 to 9 percent previously estimated by the Office of Management and Budget.

"I have won the fight to prevent American taxpayers from any risk of paying a dime," Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.), a chief critic of the guarantees, said in a statement Friday.

Obey, who chairs the House Appropriations

subcommittee on foreign operations, said he had not yet read the details of the agreement.

But he said it appeared to be "consistent with U.S. efforts to achieve peace in the region and consistent with our obligation during tough times here at home that American taxpayers not be asked to pay even one dime toward that agreement."

Obey also noted the "dramatically" changed policy of the new Israeli government on settlement construction in the administered territories and its flexibility in the Middle East peace talks.

The congressman had supported Bush's insistence that the Israeli government halt such settlement activity in order to secure the loans, a condition rejected by the previous government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and by the U.S. pro-Israel lobby.

The new government, led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, has pledged to block new housing construction in the territories and sharply curb those units already under construction.

**President Retains Discretion**

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee also praised the loan package, saying the guarantees "represent an important American humanitarian interest (that) will not come at the expense of the American taxpayer."

"We urge Congress to act on the legislation expeditiously," now that the "encumbrances" have been removed, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

While the legislation does not spell out conditions for the guarantees, Capitol Hill sources say they will be issued with "specific understandings in mind" relating to settlements and the need for Israeli economic reform. The president will retain much of the discretion about when and whether to issue the guarantees.

"If those understandings are broken, sums can be deducted," said one source, who said a letter of understanding clarifying the specifics of the agreement is yet to be worked out.

The Senate is expected to put the package into its foreign aid bill, which could be reported out of committee as soon as this week and then be fashioned into a House-Senate compromise bill.

At the same time that pro-Israel groups appeared to issue a nearly palpable sigh of relief that a long and contentious battle with the administration was over, they registered fresh concern in response to the news of the F-15 sale.

In a widely perceived effort to boost his election campaign by saving thousands of jobs, Bush made the announcement Friday before workers at the McDonnell Douglas Corp. in St. Louis, which manufactures the F-15.

"In these times of economic transition, I want to do everything I can to keep Americans at work," the president said. But he added that as commander in chief, he had also had to consider the implications for stability in the Middle East, preserving Israel's qualitative edge and the Middle East peace process.

"We recognize the (administration's) efforts to ensure Israel's qualitative edge is not eroded," said Hoenlein of the Conference of Presidents.

But he said the conference was still opposed

to the principle of a sale to a country "that has not ended its state of war with Israel and not even its boycott."

While Hoenlein said he believed the sale would not be blocked, he said he wanted to maximize assurances there would be a new, higher level of technology made available to Israel.

"We look to the early implementation of those assurances and the continuation of the ongoing consultations between Washington and Jerusalem on this matter," he said.

#### **NJCRC Expresses 'Deep Concern'**

Likewise, "deep concern" about the proposed sale was expressed by the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the national coordinating body for more than 100 national agencies and local community councils.

A statement issued by NJCRC said it was concerned about the effects of the sale "on the overall military balance in the Middle East," as well as its impact on "the administration's stated goal of seeking restraint of the massive transfer of arms to this unstable region."

NJCRC also said it was "disappointed that the administration would reward a country that continues to violate fundamental principles of free trade by boycotting American and other companies simply because they engage in trade with Israel."

NJCRC called for a policy that preserves jobs without compromising "the national security interests of the United States or one of our closest allies, Israel."

An AIPAC statement said the lobby was concerned about the "introduction of sophisticated lethal weaponry" into the volatile region and into a country not at peace with Israel.

AIPAC officials planned to consult with the pro-Israel community and review the package once it was formally submitted, said a spokesperson.

Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.), a pro-Israel lawmaker and longtime critic of administration arms policies, attacked the sale and vowed to fight it with legislation co-authored by fellow Democratic Reps. Mel Levine of California and Obey of Wisconsin.

But he acknowledged the fight would be "uphill."

Berman blasted the sale as a "desperate stop-gap attempt to mitigate the failure of Reagan-Bush economics." He said the administration "talked a good game on arms control" but demonstrated with the decision it "has no interest in staunching the arms flow to the region," which he said would be destabilized by the sale.

Democratic presidential nominee Bill Clinton, whose recent statement of conditional support for the sale has been cited as propelling the administration forward, said he would reserve judgment about the sale until he had seen the details. He said he was concerned about its impact on Israel's security.

The package is to include \$5 billion in planes, with another \$4 billion in support, spare parts, munitions and training.

More than half of the planes reportedly would be a version of the F-15E, the most advanced version of the plane, flown until now only by the U.S. Air Force, but downgraded with less sophisticated weapons and navigation equipment. They would have a "dual role" capacity of launching pinpoint attacks against ground targets.

The rest reportedly would be successors to the F-15C and F-15D purchased by Saudi Arabia in the past.

#### **OPPOSITION TO COMPROMISE ON GOLAN MOUNTS AS RABIN STANDS HIS GROUND** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 13 (JTA) -- Public opposition to Israeli concessions on the Golan Heights has mounted as Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reiterates readiness to give up parts of the strategic heights in exchange for peace with Syria.

Thousands of demonstrators at Ben-Gurion Airport chanted "Rabin is a traitor" and carried placards claiming Israeli sovereignty over the Golan to convey a message to Israeli negotiators departing Sunday for Washington to resume peace talks after a 10-day recess.

The demonstration was part of wider public action planned by the Golan lobby, amid growing debate over the fate of the plateau overlooking northern Galilee.

The issue has divided the Labor camp's own kibbutz movement, triggered controversy over the intentions of the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin in respect to the area and prompted a halachic controversy over the measure of sanctity to be accorded the territory.

Within the Labor-affiliated settlement sector, the United Kibbutz Movement last week endorsed government policy on the Golan. Countering, members of kibbutzim on the heights circulated a petition over the weekend calling on the movement to take a stand opposing territorial compromise on the Golan.

Perceptions of Begin's view of the Golan's future received sharply different expression as both sides sought support for their views in those of Likud's undisputed ideological leader.

Begin's longtime personal secretary, Yehiel Kadishai, said the late prime minister had been opposed to any withdrawal from the Golan.

#### **Rabbinical Leaders At Odds, Too**

Kadishai was responding to a claim that Begin left the door open for negotiations with the Syrians by refraining from imposing Israeli sovereignty on the area in drawing up the Golan Law 13 years ago.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal of Labor said that by this action, Begin left a window open for territorial compromise.

But Begin associates and right-wing leaders denied this interpretation.

Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, in a telephone interview from Moscow, where he was on a visit, said the longtime Likud leader would never have given up any territory in the Golan.

However, the parliamentary record shows that Begin in 1981 told the Knesset the Golan Law did not mean the annexation of the Golan and that it would not prevent negotiations with the Syrians "once they are ready to negotiate."

Rabbinical leaders are at odds as well over the Golan.

Rabbi Shlomo Goren, a former chief rabbi, said over the weekend that the Golan is not part of the biblical Land of Israel and there is therefore no obligation to keep it.

But Rabbi Shaul Israeli, the head of Yeshivat Harav in Jerusalem, disagreed, saying there are several levels of sanctity in the Land of Israel. The Golan is not as sacred as other areas, he said, but it is still part of the country and should not be given up.

Moreover, yielding the Golan would have implications for other, more sacred areas of the land, the rabbi said.

## OSI INITIATES CASES AGAINST TWO MEN ACCUSED OF CONCEALING WARTIME PAST

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Sept. 13 (JTA) -- The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations has initiated legal action to revoke the U.S. citizenship of two alleged Nazi war criminals.

On Sept. 9, the department filed a complaint against Jozsef Szendi, a Hungarian emigre living in Cookeville, Tenn., who allegedly took part in the persecution of Jews and others in Budapest during World War II.

Among the activities Szendi is alleged to have undertaken was a raid on a building in Budapest where Jews had been hidden under the aegis of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg.

And on Sept. 10, the Justice Department announced it had filed a complaint to revoke the citizenship of Anton Bless, a recent resident of Lecanto, Fla., who is accused of concealing his service in the SS as a Nazi concentration camp guard.

But the department said it had been informed by Bless' attorney that his client had fled the country after being told the complaint was to be filed.

The attorney said Bless does not plan to return to the United States. It was not reported where he went.

The complaint against Bless was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The department alleged that Bless, 67, a retired machinist, joined the Waffen SS in 1942 and served in the SS Death's Head Battalion at Auschwitz.

According to the complaint, Bless, an ethnic German from Yugoslavia, concealed his service as an SS guard in 1956, when he entered the United States from Salzburg, Austria, and in 1964, when he applied for U.S. citizenship, which he was granted.

The case against Szendi, a retired 77-year-old janitor, is the first filed by the Justice Department against a Hungarian charged to have been a Nazi war criminal.

The complaint was filed in U.S. District Court in Nashville by the department's Criminal Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Tennessee.

The confluence of these charges and the decision in the same court to investigate Justice Department conduct in the case of John Demjanjuk is only a coincidence, a government source said.

### Member Of Armed Commando Group

According to the government complaint, Szendi voluntarily joined the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie and personally transported Jewish civilians from Budapest to the German SS in Poland.

From 1939 to 1941, the Gendarmerie deported between 16,000 and 18,000 Jews from throughout Hungary to Poland, where the SS shot them dead.

The formal complaint against Szendi said that in 1941, he participated in confining Hungarian Jews in ghettos and deporting them to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex in Poland, where most were murdered in the gas chambers.

The complaint alleges that after his initial period of persecutions, from 1939 to 1941, Szendi became a member of the armed commando wing of a Hungarian terrorist organization, the National

Organization of Accountability, which was controlled by the fascist Arrow Cross.

The commando group was responsible for assaults, torture, killings of public officials, diplomats, political figures and unarmed Jewish civilians, the complaint said.

The government charged that Szendi personally assisted in the persecution of unarmed Jews and others, including participating in a 1944 armed raid on a building in Budapest in search of Jews hidden there by a rescue program directed by Wallenberg.

According to the complaint, Szendi misrepresented and concealed his wartime activities when applying for immigration to the United States in 1956 and when he applied for U.S. citizenship in 1964.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles praised the Justice Department's announcement but found bitter irony in the fact that someone who allegedly persecuted the Jews whom Wallenberg had tried to save had himself been saved by America.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the center's associate dean, said, "While we applaud the OSI announcement today, we find it outrageous that the persecutor of 'Wallenberg's Jews' found safe haven in the United States even as America virtually abandoned the Holocaust's greatest Christian hero to his fate after he was arrested by the Soviets in 1945."

## JEWISH CEMETERY IN LYON DESECRATED, POINTING TO WIDENING ANTI-SEMITISM

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Sept. 13 (JTA) -- A Jewish cemetery in the French city of Lyon was desecrated over the weekend, the latest of a series of recent attacks on Jewish graveyards in Western Europe.

Some 20 monuments were daubed with anti-Semitic slogans, but no stones were broken. A cemetery guard discovered the vandalism early Sunday morning.

"To Hitler, our father" and "Death to the dirty Jews" were some of the slogans pasted on the wall of the cemetery and on some of the graves.

The Jewish community was particularly shocked because the vandals chose to desecrate three graves of infants.

The cemetery, one of the oldest in this area of southeastern France, dates back to 1794.

Michel Noir, the mayor of Lyon, joined close to 1,000 persons who gathered in front of the cemetery Sunday afternoon to demonstrate against the desecration.

Two weeks ago, some 200 headstones were overturned and about 60 were broken in the Jewish cemetery of Herrlisheim, in the Alsace region in eastern France.

Not far from there, the synagogue of Saint-Avoid was torched by a man the French authorities described as "an outcast," who confessed to hating Jews and capitalists.

Jews in France are concerned that racial and anti-Semitic incidents are spilling over the border from Germany. Similar worries have been expressed by the Jews of Italy, who have also suffered recent anti-Semitic incidents that seem to have a neo-Nazi ideological base.

Last week, anti-Semitic slogans and swastikas were found scrawled on graves in the Jewish section of the cemetery at San Remo on the Italian Riviera.

# BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

## CONTROVERSY OVER ROLE OF KESSIM IS LATEST TO GALVANIZE ETHIOPIANS

By Michele Chablin

JERUSALEM, Sept. 13 (JTA) -- Ethiopian Jews have become increasingly disgruntled over their status in Israeli society, and they are turning their frustration into political action.

One of the latest issues of discontent has been the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's refusal to recognize the authority of the Ethiopian Jewish leaders, known as kessim, in religious matters.

For two weeks, the kessim have demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's Office, demanding the right to officiate at religious ceremonies, such as marriages, and in divorce proceedings here, as they did in Ethiopia.

The Chief Rabbinate does not recognize the kessim as rabbis because they are not versed in Jewish oral law. The Jews in Ethiopia followed the Torah but had no knowledge of the later rabbinic body of law. The chief rabbis said last week that the kessim cannot perform rabbinical functions until they pass a test in oral law.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met with a dozen kessim in an attempt to resolve the dispute or at least ease the tensions it is causing.

But Rabin told reporters afterward that he did not have the authority to intervene in the dispute. "This is a matter for the rabbinate, and I cannot make a decision," he said.

Acting Religious Affairs Minister Uzi Baram has proposed a compromise that would allow the kessim the right to perform religious functions after a six-month course of study, rather than the usual three-year study period.

But the kessim who met with Rabin said they had rejected Baram's proposal on the grounds that kessim had been the recognized religious authorities in Ethiopia for 2,500 years.

At a news conference on behalf of the kessim called by the Movement for Ethiopian Jews in Israel, activist Ori Massala had harsh words for the prime minister.

### 'A Deep Insult To Us As Jews'

"We are down in front of the Prime Minister's Office, but he has not come out to us. He travels to Mevasseret Zion (absorption center) to kiss Ethiopian children, but he pays no attention to the Ethiopians outside his door. This is a deep insult to us as Jews," he said.

The controversy over the authority of the kessim is only the latest of many issues to galvanize Ethiopian Jewish immigrants here.

In recent months, the Ethiopians have staged protest marches and hunger strikes, televised appeals and news conferences. Their demands for permanent housing, improved education and recognition as full-fledged Jews top the 9 p.m. news and the front pages of local newspapers.

After years of silence, the Ethiopians are demanding action.

The public emergence of the intensely private Ethiopian community has embarrassed several government agencies. From the Housing Ministry to the Jewish Agency, from the Absorption Ministry to the Prime Minister's Office, government officials are scurrying for solutions.

Many factors have contributed to the Ethiopians' success in bringing their issues to the public, says longtime activist Rachamim Elazar.

"First, it is important to understand that

our political awareness did not develop overnight," said Elazar, who is secretary of the United Ethiopia Association, an umbrella group of 50 organizations.

"Six or seven years ago, after Operation Moses (brought in the first large wave of Ethiopian Jews), our students demanded that the government continue to rescue our families from Ethiopia.

"It worked, and after that things quieted down," he said. "But now that the last Jews are out, we have begun to focus on problems with the absorption process."

### 'Struggling For A Place In This Society'

It is this past experience that has enabled the community to mobilize now, he said. "The students are now adults. They have lived here many years, speak Hebrew and understand the system," he said.

As the activists have matured, so, too, have their organizational skills.

"All groups need help getting off the ground," said Sari Revlin, director of Shatil, a non-profit group that gives assistance to voluntary organizations.

"We have helped various Ethiopian organizations, among others, to define their goals and to achieve them. We taught them how to develop a work plan, a budget, how to work with the media. In short, how to get their point across," Revlin said.

Thanks to organizations like Shatil, several Ethiopian groups have learned that the best way to publicize a hunger strike or political demonstration is by contacting the media.

During the past few months, televised images have helped the Ethiopians get their point across, and in some cases, to get results.

One such case last month involved hundreds of new immigrants, including many young children, who began a march from the coastal city of Ashkelon to the hills of Jerusalem to demand better housing.

After hearing news reports of the demonstration, the absorption minister drove to the march and promised to look into the matter personally.

Despite the success of that march in bringing to light immigrants' housing woes, many activists still see an uphill battle.

"We are still struggling for a place in this society, for the right to be married and divorced by any rabbi in Israel, for our religious leaders to be recognized, for decent housing and jobs," said Erez Kinde of the Movement for Ethiopian Jews. "As far as I can tell, this is only the beginning."

### OVERSEAS KIN CAN SOUND SHOFAR

JERUSALEM, Sept. 13 (JTA) -- Parents, relatives and friends of Israeli soldiers who are presently out of the country can dial a number in Israel to have their personal Rosh Hashanah greetings aired on army radio during the upcoming holiday.

The holiday connection is a joint venture of Bezek, the Israel Telecommunication Corp., and Galei Tzahal, the army radio.

Callers who wish to participate in that program can call Sept. 14 to Sept. 22 at 972-3-65-2222, and leave a message for their soldier.

The actual call, or an announcer's version of the call, will be broadcast on army radio on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.