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**PROTEST OVER U.S. POLICY ON ISRAEL
EMERGES AS MOTIVE IN N.Y. BOMBING**

NEW YORK, March 28 (JTA) -- Protest over America's support for Israel and U.S. policy in the Middle East in general have emerged as the prime motive for the Feb. 26 bombing of New York's World Trade Center, according to new evidence revealed Sunday.

One of the five suspects arrested so far in connection with the bombing sent a letter to The New York Times claiming responsibility for the attack, police disclosed.

The letter, sent by a group identifying itself as the Fifth Battalion of the Liberation Army, demanded that the United States cut all military, political and economic aid to Israel, as well as end diplomatic relations with Israel.

In a front-page news report Sunday, the Times said it received the letter four days after the bombing and turned it over to investigators.

Late last week, investigators concluded the letter was authentic and found evidence linking it to one of the suspects arrested in connection with the attack, which killed six people and injured more than 1,000 others.

"There is no question that the letter was prepared by a member of this cell," the Times quoted a senior investigator as saying.

The evidence linking the letter to the suspects is "incontrovertible and it's not speculation," the investigator said.

The letter, written in sometimes incorrect English, is the first definite evidence that the bombing had a political motive.

"This action was done in response for the American political, economical, and military support to Israel the state of terrorism and to the rest of the dictator countries in the region," read the letter, which was reproduced in the Times.

The group threatened to continue attacks "against military and civilian targets in and out the United States."

The group also claimed to have more than 150 soldiers willing to carry out suicide attacks.

"The American people must know, that their civilians who got killed are not better than those who are getting killed by the American weapons and support," the letter said.

Group Not Previously Known

Government officials said they had no previous record of the Liberation Army Fifth Battalion. A garbled return address in Arabic, and the name given at the letter's bottom, was Abu Bakr al-Makce, with a rank of field marshal or major.

The name is the same as the Arabic political leader who succeeded the Islamic prophet Mohammed after he died more than 1,300 years ago. It is also the name of a mosque in Brooklyn where several of the bombing suspects were known to pray.

Robert Precht, a lawyer for Mohammed Salameh, the first of the five suspects arrested, said he doubted the authenticity of the letter.

Salameh, the chemical engineer Nidal Ayyad and Ibrahim Elgabrowni have all pleaded innocent with the case.

An innocent plea was also entered on behalf

of Mahmud Abohalima, the man accused of masterminding the plot, who was brought back to the United States last week from Egypt, where he had been arrested earlier this month.

A fifth suspect, Bilal Alkaiisi, 27, a Jordanian national living in New Jersey, has also been charged with aiding and abetting the bombing. He turned himself in to the authorities last week.

In a related development, Rabbi Avi Weiss, head of a direct-action group called AMCHA, the Coalition for Jewish Concerns, said he received a letter from a group calling itself the Arab-American Coalition for Liberation of Palestine that threatened a jihad, or holy war, until Jews and Israel relinquish control of what it called the homeland of the Palestinian people.

Weiss, who is also religious leader of an Orthodox synagogue in the Bronx, had picketed outside the Al Salam Mosque in Jersey City after it was revealed that several of the suspects had prayed there.

**ASHKELON MAN AND BORDER POLICEMAN
ARE LATEST VICTIMS OF ARAB VIOLENCE**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 28 (JTA) -- A wave of terrorist attacks continued throughout the weekend here, prompting calls by government leaders for Israelis to prepare for tough times and persevere in the search for peace.

A 49-year-old Israeli from Ashkelon was stabbed to death Sunday in a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, apparently by two Palestinian construction workers building a new home for the victim.

Later in the day, an Arab stabbed a young Israeli man in an eastern Jerusalem neighborhood near where a terrorist recently slashed students and a principal in a school courtyard.

The victim walked with a knife in his back into the Jewish neighborhood of Armon Hanatziv, where a passing taxi picked him up and took him to the hospital.

Security forces were searching Sunday night for the perpetrators in both incidents, and the army announced it was banning Palestinians from the Gaza Strip from entering Israel proper.

Also in Gaza, several shots were fired and a grenade hurled at a border police lookout post Sunday, but the grenade was dismantled before it could explode.

The attacks followed the killing Saturday of a 19-year-old Moslem border policeman in the West Bank town of Tulkarm.

In broad daylight and on a crowded street, an unmasked gunman ambushed the jeep of border policeman Jamal Masalha, who had joined the paramilitary force six months ago.

Officials said Masalha, who was buried Sunday, was the first Israeli Arab to be killed while serving with the border police. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin responded Sunday to the latest incidents by saying Israelis must resist the campaign by Arab terrorists to sow panic and fear among them.

In a speech to the Labor Party's Central Committee, Rabin declared Israel must reassert its fighting spirit to combat the wave of terrorism.

Once again the prime minister called upon

the nation's youth to defend its schools against attacks of the kind that occurred last week in Jerusalem.

Rabin's remarks prompted a bitter response from some Israelis, who believe that fighting terrorism is the job of the government and security forces.

The Cabinet, meanwhile, agreed Sunday to cut 50 million shekels from the national budget to pay for the recruitment of 1,000 new police to help fight the terror wave.

Jewish settlers in Gaza have said in response to the current wave of violence that they plan to replace their Arab laborers. In several recent incidents, Palestinians have killed their employers.

But Sunday's killing was a grim reminder that the settlers cannot find enough Jews willing to fill jobs in fields such as construction, leaving them little recourse but to employ Palestinians.

INFLUENTIAL HEZBOLLAH LEADER SAYS IT'S GOD'S WILL TO ERADICATE ISRAEL By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 28 (JTA) -- A prominent Hezbollah leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, has declared that his organization will continue fighting Israel regardless of the peace talks and their ultimate outcome.

"It is the will of God that Israel will be eradicated sooner or later. This is inevitable," Nasrallah was quoted as saying by the Lebanese press.

"The resistance will continue even if there is a peace accord," he said, charging that Israel would "double its arrogance against the Arabs" if peace agreements were reached.

Another Hezbollah leader, Sheik Mohammed Yazbeck, was quoted as saying that anyone who would sign "documents of submission to Israel," apparently referring to peace treaties, should have their hands chopped off, an Islamic punishment.

In recent weeks, the Shi'ite, Iranian-backed Hezbollah has stepped up attacks against Israel and its allied South Lebanon Army in the Israeli-controlled security zone of southern Lebanon.

Clashes continued over the weekend, with one SLA soldier killed and two others lightly wounded in separate incidents Saturday in the Jezzine region north of the security zone.

The clashes came less than 24 hours after Hezbollah released a Jezzine resident held hostage for more than three years as a "goodwill gesture for the Id el-Fitr festival at the end of Ramadan," the Islamic holy month.

The hostage, Dr. Elias Asmar, was accused at the time of his kidnapping of collaborating with the SLA and the Israel Defense Force.

SLA commander Gen. Antoine Lehad freed 16 detainees from his El Khiam jail inside the security zone last week, also as a gesture for the Moslem Id el-Fitr holiday.

In the Saturday attacks, a roadside bomb was detonated near SLA troops while they were on operational duties in the area, slightly wounding two of them.

SLA gunners responded by bombarding suspected terrorist targets north of the zone, killing two civilians and wounding nine other people, according to local reports.

Later, guerrilla gunmen opened fire on an SLA position in the region with mortars and light weapons, apparently in reply to the shelling.

One SLA soldier was badly hurt and later died of his wounds.

MINISTER'S CALL FOR CEDING GOLAN CREATES AN UPROAR IN THE CABINET By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 28 (JTA) -- Environment Minister Yossi Sarid has created an uproar in the Cabinet by calling explicitly for Israel to cede the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria.

Sarid, a member of the left-wing Meretz bloc, made the proposal Sunday, triggering a volley of arguments among Cabinet ministers and dissension within the governing Labor Party.

Tourism Minister Uzi Baram of Labor told reporters he emphatically agreed with Sarid, though he did not necessarily approve of the timing of the outspoken minister's call.

"If I were in negotiations with Syria and this was the choice I faced, I would cede the Golan for peace," Baram said.

Agriculture Minister Ya'acov Tsur, who is close to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, termed such statements "irresponsible."

Tsur said Rabin supports withdrawal "on the Golan, not from the Golan," presumably meaning that he would accept a partial withdrawal but not a complete pullout.

Sarid's statement was the most forthright made so far by a government figure in favor of trading the Golan for peace.

Sarid said that peace with Syria, anchored in a full normalization of relations and adequate security arrangements, was more of an asset to Israel than sovereignty over the strategic plateau.

Politicians of the right-wing opposition Likud and Tsomet parties demanded Sarid's immediate ouster from the government as a result of his remarks. But given Meretz's pivotal position in Rabin's coalition, those demands are unrealistic.

The opposition reaction, however, was designed to underscore the divisions that exist not only within the nation but within the Cabinet over Israel's position on the Golan.

Sarid's move is doubly significant, and controversial, coming as it does just weeks before the next round of Middle East peace talks are due to resume in Washington.

Itamar Rabinovitch, Israel's chief negotiator with Syria as well as Israeli ambassador to Washington, said Sunday that the territorial question of the Golan would be discussed in the forthcoming round -- if the Syrians took a satisfactory position on the nature of the proposed peace and normalization between the two countries.

ISRAEL LETS WOMAN VISIT SYRIA

TEL AVIV, March 28 (JTA) -- In an unusual display of Israeli-Syrian cooperation, an 85-year-old Druse woman was permitted to cross the Golan Heights into Syria last week to attend the funeral of a son she had not seen in many years.

Hindiya Hatib, from the village of Ein Kineh, was accompanied by her daughter as she crossed the border at Kuneitra on March 25.

The crossing was facilitated with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Samir Dabus, chairman of the Ein Kineh local council, praised the Syrian and Israeli authorities for processing Hatib's application as speedily as possible.

"We have suffered for 26 years as a result of Syria and Israel being enemies. We hope that this situation will change and that families will not have to wait for years to be reunited and that borders will be open," he said.

NEWS ANALYSIS:

NETANYAHU STRIVES FOR PARTY UNITY IN BID TO UNSEAT LABOR GOVERNMENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 28 (JTA) -- Benjamin Netanyahu has handily defeated more seasoned rivals to win the chairmanship of the opposition Likud party.

But how far he gets in accomplishing his equally ambitious goal of unseating the Labor government will depend on his ability to unite his own fractured party and on the government's success in coping with the mounting challenges of Palestinian violence, the Middle East peace process and high unemployment.

In his drive to become Israel's next prime minister, Netanyahu has already moved on both fronts -- by starting a process of reconciliation with his losing rivals in the Likud party primary and by launching fresh attacks on the Labor government's policies.

Netanyahu, who was elected Likud chairman on March 24 with roughly 52 percent of the party members' ballots, met Sunday with Maxim Levy, the brother of his chief rival, David Levy, in an apparent attempt to heal party divisions.

Netanyahu, popularly known as Bibi, emerged in good spirits from his meeting with Maxim Levy, who is mayor of Ramla, and pledged cooperation with "every element in our movement" to prepare for and fight the local mayoral battles later this year.

David Levy, who finished second in the Likud primary with 26 percent of the vote, has reiterated that he will not take a leadership position in a team created by Netanyahu.

But political observers saw the meeting with Maxim Levy -- and the mayor's own businesslike comments afterward -- as a significant indicator that the recriminations between Netanyahu and David Levy would not be allowed to hamstring Likud's efforts to move forward.

Maxim Levy said Netanyahu's election is a fact. "The fact that I am here to meet with him is also significant," he said. "Both David and I feel a responsibility to the movement."

"We have to gear up for the hard battles ahead over control of the local authorities," he added.

Lingering Bitterness Over 'Bibi-gate'

Netanyahu, for his part, said he would continue a brisk series of meetings he has already begun with other key political figures.

Over the weekend, he conferred with Moshe Katsav, who came fourth in the leadership contest, with 6.5 percent of the vote, and with leaders of the other right-wing opposition parties: the National Religious Party, Tsomet and Moledet.

Netanyahu was also to meet Monday with Ze'ev "Benny" Begin, who drew 15 percent of the primary vote, and former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, who chose not to run in the race.

"I intend to harness all the forces in our movement," Netanyahu said. "I do not doubt I will enjoy full cooperation from everyone."

Netanyahu also seeks a meeting with Levy.

Levy, however, refuses to cooperate with the new chairman unless Netanyahu apologizes for what Levy insists was a false accusation leveled at him during the muddled campaign scandal of "Bibi-gate."

Although never naming him outright, Netanyahu accused Levy and his supporters of black-

mailing him over an extramarital affair he admits he was having.

The scandal over the affair continues to rumble on, threatening to dog the new leader.

On Sunday, a private investigator told army radio that Netanyahu had offered him \$200,000 to \$300,000 if he could prove the existence of a tape or video that Netanyahu claims was used in a blackmail attempt against him.

The private investigator said Netanyahu made the offer 10 days after lodging a police complaint.

Levy has charged that the police delayed announcing the results of their investigation into the blackmail attempt until after the primary. And unnamed political sources were quoted Sunday on Israel Radio as alleging a delay was ordered by the outgoing national police chief, Ya'acov Turner.

Such a postponement might have aided Netanyahu and hurt Levy, who demanded that Netanyahu step down if the police found nothing to suggest Levy's supporters were behind the blackmail attempt.

Gearing Up For Local Elections

Apart from internal Likud party politics, Netanyahu's success will depend largely on the Labor government's performance in fighting the current wave of Palestinian attacks on Israelis, curbing unemployment and pushing forward the peace process.

Netanyahu already has started to turn his attacks away from his Likud rivals and toward the Labor government, telling the nation over the weekend that it must open a new debate on the questions of security and the Israel's future borders.

Some observers here have suggested that the election of a new Likud leader will itself spur Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government into a more determined effort to make progress in the peace process.

Labor, for its part, seems to recognize that the government's mediocre performance to date, coupled with the Likud's injection of young blood at the top, could take a heavy toll in upcoming local elections.

Apparently in reaction to this fear, Labor has energetically scoured its ranks to find strong candidates for the main mayoral slots.

In Beersheba, Turner is expected to run against Likud incumbent Yitzhak Rager. And in Haifa, Labor has enlisted the just-retired popular army general Amram Mitzna.

In Jerusalem, the party has prevailed on octogenarian Mayor Teddy Kollek to run yet again, for fear of the capital falling to Likud candidate Ehud Olmert.

For the Tel Aviv mayoralship, Labor will run Knesset member and war hero Avigdor Kahalani.

NEO-NAZI VIOLENCE IN GERMANY DECLINING

BONN, March 28 (JTA) -- The number of violent attacks by right-wing extremists in Germany decreased considerably this year compared to the first three months of 1992, according to Interior Minister Rudolf Seiters.

However, in releasing this information at a meeting with 16 state interior ministers, Seiters said there is still a need for ongoing efforts to douse the fires of hatred against foreigners.

From the beginning of this year through March 15, 173 cases of politically motivated attacks against foreigners were registered, compared with 283 in the same period a year ago.

SS MAN EXTRADITED FROM U.S. IS ACQUITTED BY GERMAN COURT

By David Kantor

BONN, March 28 (JTA) -- Bruno Karl Blach, an accused Nazi war criminal who was extradited to Germany from the United States following a lengthy legal procedure, was acquitted last week of all charges against him.

In addition, Dominik Gleba, another accused Nazi, drew a suspended two-year prison sentence from the same court.

The prosecution had charged both men with having shot slave labor camp inmates in Austria in April 1945.

The court in the western German city of Duisberg found that it could not prove guilt against Blach, who is 73.

Gleba, also 73, received a suspended two-year sentence for complicity in the murder of one inmate. That murder occurred during a so-called "death march," when 2,500 inmates of the Wiener-Neudorf slave labor camp were ordered to walk to the Mauthausen death camp.

Blach was extradited to Germany in 1990 to stand trial for killing inmates at two concentration camps where he served as a guard.

A native of Czechoslovakia, Blach lived in the Los Angeles suburb of La Habra. The U.S. Justice Department charged that he entered the United States illegally in 1956, having lied to U.S. authorities about his wartime activities in the Waffen SS. He maintained he had been in the German army and air force.

The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations alleged that Blach joined the Nazi Party in January 1939, becoming a Death's Head battalion SS guard and dog handler at the Dachau death camp from 1940 to 1943 and at the Wiener-Neudorf camp from 1943 to 1945.

A West German investigation indicated that Blach, as an SS corporal, killed 38 inmates at Wiener-Neudorf because they were too weak to evacuate when the camp was liberated by American troops in April 1945.

His deportation trial in southern California was an emotionally charged proceeding where numerous Holocaust survivors gave testimony against him.

20 ARRESTED IN CRACKDOWN ON HATE MUSIC

BONN, March 28 (JTA) -- At least 20 people were arrested last week in an ongoing crackdown on members and producers of popular music groups propagating Nazi ideas and hatred of foreigners.

It was the second such arrest in two weeks.

Police said they had found incriminating audio and videotapes during a sweep of musicians' apartments and offices on March 25.

The materials were confiscated and are to be examined by legal experts.

This latest action was largely directed against Storkraft, a leading rock group whose name means disruptive power, and other producers of so-called "skinhead rock."

An officer at the Wiesbaden headquarters of the federal police said some of those arrested may soon face criminal charges for inciting to racial discrimination, anti-Semitism and violence against non-Germans.

The raids were a part of a continuing government campaign designed to hit at the infrastructure of neo-Nazi groups and their supporters.

DOVISH ISRAELI POLITICIAN GETS CALMER RECEPTION IN LOS ANGELES

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, March 28 (JTA) -- Six years ago, when Yael Dayan presented what were then considered ultradovish views at a Peace Now outdoor rally in Beverly Hills, she was shouted down by 200 enraged hecklers, and police had to escort her out of harm's way.

Last Friday, when Dayan, now a Labor Party member of the Knesset, spoke again in Los Angeles in tandem with a Palestinian representative, audience behavior could fairly be described as decorous.

If her advocacy of a Palestinian state and her castigation of Israel's decision to deport 415 fundamentalists to Lebanon elicited no standing ovations, neither were her opinions met with significant protests.

True, Orthodox leaders boycotted the occasion after bitterly denouncing the Jewish Federation Council for co-sponsoring her appearance.

And half a dozen stalwarts of the militant Jewish Defense League hurled insults and obscenities at Dayan, as she made her way into the Jewish community building.

In both instances, however, the protesters' wrath was directed less at her political views than her recent statement that the Bible suggests King David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers.

Indeed, one curious aspect of the event was that no one appeared to object to the appearance of Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi, the Palestinian speaker, before a mainstream Jewish audience.

At this event, as at a sparsely attended news conference and during an address to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, Dayan was at some pains to stress that her views -- including support for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories and establishment of an independent Palestinian state -- now coincide with mainstream opinion and government policy in Israel.

Positions Fit For A President

To buttress her argument, she invoked the name of Israel's President-designate Ezer Weizman, who was elected last week. "Every word I say would be endorsed by the next president," said Dayan.

Barghouthi, a physician and Palestinian delegate to the multilateral peace talks on Middle East regional issues, proposed that a future Palestinian state could serve as a bridge for Israel to the surrounding Arab world. Palestinians, he said, are "actually very similar to Israelis."

There were few basic disagreements between the two speakers, one being the future status of Jerusalem. Dayan advocated that all of Jerusalem remain part of Israel, although, she said, Arabs in eastern Jerusalem should be allowed to vote on Palestinian issues.

Barghouthi urged that eastern Jerusalem be the capital of a future Palestinian state and that western Jerusalem be Israel's capital.

"No Palestinian delegation can give in on the issue of Jerusalem," he said.

Another divergence of opinion emerged on the idea of having a binational Arab-Jewish state.

"If it's acceptable to you, it's OK with us," Barghouthi said at the World Affairs Council.

But Dayan objected strongly to the idea. "That's impossible," she said. "We have differences in religion and culture. We want a Jewish state and a Knesset that's Jewish."