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**ISRAEL STEPS UP LEBANON BOMBING
IN ATTEMPT TO INCREASE PRESSURE**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 27 (JTA) -- When Israeli jets streaked across the sky over Lebanon and bombs began falling at the beginning of the week, some Cabinet ministers expressed quiet concern that the operation might escalate and spin out of control.

Although the operation so far has remained, in essence, one prolonged air strike, the scale of the raids has indeed been stepped up in intensity through a number of distinct phases since the action began Sunday.

By Tuesday, reports from Lebanon said non-stop bombing and shelling had sent tens of thousands of villagers fleeing southern Lebanon.

Initially, Israeli policy-makers hoped that after the first air strike Sunday morning, against 10 guerrilla targets, the pro-Iranian Hezbollah militia would get the message and accordingly back down from its own attacks.

But the opposite happened: Hezbollah responded with Katyusha rockets that killed two Israeli civilians Sunday evening in the northern border town of Kiryat Shmona.

The Israel Defense Force then began Stage 2, expanding the air raids to 39 targets throughout Lebanon.

But Hezbollah refused to back down, still responding with Katyushas. On Tuesday, Hezbollah fighters attacked an IDF tank within the Israel-controlled security zone in southern Lebanon, killing one soldier, Cpl. Gadi So'ed, and wounding three others.

And in Beirut, Hezbollah leaders declared they would continue the battle and fire rockets at Galilee until Israel withdrew from Lebanon.

On Tuesday, the IDF appeared to have shifted into a third phase: the massive shelling of villages north of the security zone, with Israel's declared goal of causing a massive exodus of refugees from those villages to Lebanese towns and cities further north.

Hundreds Reported Injured

Rabin apparently believes that once refugees settle around Beirut, they will pressure the Lebanese government to control Hezbollah and, more importantly, get the Lebanese government to pressure Syria to rein in the Shi'ite group.

But the plan may run into difficulties there, since Syria has refrained so far from taking any such action. Damascus, in fact, reiterated its policy of not intervening to stop what it called "legitimate resistance against foreign occupation." It suggested that Israel withdraw from southern Lebanon and eliminate the motivation for Hezbollah's aggression.

Another difficulty is that by Tuesday, there was no indication that Hezbollah fighters were following in the steps of civilian villagers and leaving the region.

On the contrary, Hezbollah staged attacks on Israeli forces in the security zone, and the Katyusha rockets kept coming.

The Israeli air force flew hundreds of sorties against Hezbollah targets all along the front Tuesday. At the same time, IDF heavy mobile

artillery lobbed heavy shells at targets nearly 18 miles away.

During the first two days of the operation, Israeli gunners had fired smoke and flare shells at villages where Hezbollah guerrillas were hiding among the civilian populations. But on Tuesday, the IDF switched to heavy explosive shells after broadcasting warnings to the civilians to move out of their homes into safer areas up north.

The United Nations complained that four Nepalese soldiers of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon were injured by Israeli bombs.

UNIFIL said that some 200 members of the force were in a post when a bomb fell nearby. Nearly 20 UNIFIL vehicles were destroyed.

Israel Radio said IDF gunners had fired more than 8,000 shells and mortar bombs at more than 1,000 targets in 40 villages along the northern edge of the security zone since the start of "Operation Accountability."

The number of casualties inside Lebanon since the start of the operation is estimated at over 60 dead, with many hundreds injured.

Syria Could Stop The Attacks

Meanwhile, Israeli civilians in Galilee were ordered Tuesday to remain in their bomb shelters or reinforced safety rooms in their houses and apartments for a third day running.

Hundreds of youngsters from Kiryat Shmona have been sent to summer camps and community centers throughout the country, in an effort mounted by the Jewish National Fund.

It is uncertain what the next stage will be in the flare-up of violence in Lebanon.

Israeli experts have no doubt that Syria has the means to put an end to Hezbollah operations in Lebanon. All of Hezbollah's supply and communication lines go through Syrian territory. Its main bases are located in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, which is under the Syrian army's direct control.

Theoretically, all it takes to stop the violence is one word by Syrian President Hafez Assad. But, on the other hand, a directive to shut down Hezbollah could put Assad at odds with forces in his security and military establishment.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's upcoming trip to the region may provide an incentive for Syria to crack down on Hezbollah, but only as a gesture toward the Americans, not toward Israel. And Syria will likely demand that it be compensated in some measure by Washington.

One left-leaning Israeli columnist suggested Tuesday that the time is ripe for a peace treaty with Syria, in which Israel would withdraw from both the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, and the Syrian army would be deployed as a buffer between Israel and Lebanon.

Other Israeli columnists worried about becoming too enmeshed in Lebanon. Yediot Achronot's Nahum Barnea recalled that during the 1982 Lebanon War, then-opposition Knesset member Yitzhak Rabin urged the defense minister at the time, Ariel Sharon, to tighten the siege on Beirut.

If Israel cut off water and electricity to Beirut residents, Rabin had suggested, they would push their government to exert pressure on the terrorist organizations to surrender.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv.)

IN KIRYAT SHMONA, FLIGHT AND HIDING ARE THE NORM AFTER RAIN OF KATYUSHAS

By Michele Chabin

KIRYAT SHMONA, Israel, July 27 (JTA) -- The playground and shops of this border town were eerily silent this week, as dozens of Katyusha rockets shook Israel's northern settlements.

Less than 2 miles from the Lebanese border, Kiryat Shmona has become a virtual ghost town since tensions between Israeli troops and the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon escalated earlier this week.

Many of the town's 25,000 residents have already fled south, and others will no doubt follow if the fighting does not ease up soon.

Those who remain are glued to their televisions, where a local cable channel provides minute-by-minute updates on the security situation.

Since rockets killed two local residents on Sunday night, almost all have heeded the Israel Defense Force's warning to stay indoors, in either underground shelters or the cement "security rooms" within their own apartments, which were created during the Persian Gulf War.

Municipal workers are laboring around the clock to assist wherever they are needed. Much of their work has been devoted to making the town's 284 underground shelters livable for the duration of the crisis.

Russian Jewish activist Natan Sharansky, who is here lending moral support, likened the shelters to a cell he once occupied in the former Soviet Union during his ordeal as a prisoner of Zion.

Many of the shelters lack such basic necessities as running water and toilets. Most are unbearably hot. All are depressing. Despite the problems, however, private citizens and city workers are cooperating to make the best of a bad situation.

While the majority of residents are no strangers to Katyusha attacks and border skirmishes, no one has been able to ignore the constant "boom, boom, boom," of Israeli artillery shelling just across the border.

Accentuated by the silence in the empty streets, the blasts sound like hundreds of thunderclaps, one right after the other.

'The People Here Are Very Strong'

"People are experiencing a lot of stress," said Yitzhak Levy, a Magen David Adom paramedic.

"Though most people are coping fairly well, we've had several calls related to chest pain and other stress-related problems," he said.

"I don't want to leave," said Yaffa Simcha, the mother of four children, standing in line at the central bus station. "I've lived here all my life and I stayed put during the Lebanon War, but now I have children to worry about. They're afraid, so we'll stay with family in Tel Aviv for a few days," she said.

Yet thousands of others were preparing to weather the storm.

"I'm here to stay," said Yosef Mansour, a taxi driver from the nearby Christian village of Gush Halav. "If it's a matter of us against the Hezbollah, the Hezbollah will have to go."

"The people here are very strong," said Shoshannah Peretz, another resident. "Believe it or not, you can get used to the racket. This is a part of our lives, and we can't keep our heads in the sand. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

"This is no way to live, but what is the

alternative?" asked Phoebe Ben-Abu, sitting in a stuffy bomb shelter near her home.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's "decision to go into Lebanon was long overdue. Fewer lives would have been lost if he had acted sooner," she said.

Stifling a yawn, she conceded, "We slept in a secured room in our apartment last night, but the noise kept us up all night. I think we'll be safer underground."

The room vibrated faintly as a Katyusha landed a few blocks away.

"On second thought, we should have come here sooner," Ben-Abu said.

CHRISTOPHER RETURNING TO U.S. TO DISCUSS LEBANON SITUATION

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, July 27 (JTA) -- In an indication of American concern over the future of the Middle East peace talks, President Clinton summoned Secretary of State Warren Christopher back early from an Asian trip to discuss the current fighting in Lebanon.

Christopher had been planning to travel on from Asia to the Middle East later this week, stopping briefly in Egypt, Israel, Syria and Jordan, in an attempt to revive the stalled peace talks.

The State Department said Tuesday that Christopher would definitely travel to the Middle East very soon, but that the exact dates were still being determined.

The president said Tuesday that he had called Christopher back to Washington to discuss conditions in the Middle East before the secretary traveled to the region.

Clinton said he hoped the peace process would not be put in jeopardy by the current situation in southern Lebanon, where Israel has been shelling positions of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

He also praised Syria for showing "commendable restraint so far," and said Hezbollah and other groups opposed to the peace process should not be allowed to derail the negotiations.

One concern is that the fighting could escalate and involve Syria, thereby increasing the likelihood that the peace negotiations will be adversely affected.

The White House has blamed the fighting on Iran and Hezbollah.

"Iran and Hezbollah are responsible. I think they clearly instigated this," White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers told reporters Tuesday.

"Hezbollah has the backing of the Iranian government, and they are enemies of the peace process," she said.

Also Tuesday, Assistant Secretary of State Edward Djerejian told the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East that "the violence in southern Lebanon is yet another reminder of the urgent need to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East."

Djerejian, who heads the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, reiterated the administration's commitment to achieving progress this calendar year in the bilateral talks Israel is holding separately with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

But he also repeated an administration warning that the parties themselves must work toward peace.

JEWISH GROUPS RAISE OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED IMMIGRATION POLICY

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, July 27 (JTA) -- Jewish groups have expressed concern with portions of a new U.S. immigration policy unveiled by the Clinton administration this week and supported by key members of Congress.

Both the American Jewish Committee and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society said that elements of the plan that deal with asylum-seekers could damage the American tradition of allowing persecuted people, including Jews, to seek refuge here.

The plan, which deals with a range of immigration-related issues, was announced at a news conference Tuesday by President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and Attorney General Janet Reno.

The new policy was formulated against a backdrop of concern about illegal immigration into the United States and overly easy access to the country by potential terrorists.

The case of Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the Muslim cleric linked to the suspects in the World Trade Center bombing and an aborted plot to bomb other New York targets, brought public attention to the ease with which some people tied to terrorism enter the country.

The provision that particularly concerns Jewish groups is a proposal to quicken the procedures by which illegal aliens are processed at points of entry to the United States.

The groups have expressed concern that under the proposed new policy, low-level officials without the proper training could turn asylum-seekers away without granting them proper channels to appeal.

'Stop The Dangerous Trend'

"We must stop the dangerous trend to undermining basic refugee and asylum principles that began with shutting out Haitian boat people and now continues with the introduction of this dangerous bill," Gary Rubin, the American Jewish Committee's director of national affairs, said in a statement.

AJCommittee took part in a news conference here Tuesday called by religious, ethnic and human rights organizations to express concern about the plan's effect on asylum-seekers.

The administration, for its part, is concerned that some aliens take advantage of a lengthy set of administrative procedures to stay in the country for months or years without legal status.

Legislation containing many of the same proposals in the Clinton plan is now pending in both houses of Congress.

While the proposed changes are an improvement over the current practice of turning back shiploads of asylum-seekers, HIAS officials said the organization would like to see greater human rights protections in place for the refugees.

"We remember with grief and horror the fate of the ship the St. Louis, filled with European Jews, (that was) forced back to Hitler's inferno for lack of safe haven in the United States," the group said.

In announcing the new policy Tuesday, Clinton said the United States cannot "allow our people to be endangered by those who would enter our country to terrorize Americans."

"We must say no to illegal immigration, so that we can continue to say yes to legal immigration."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS REPORT ON HAMAS COMES UNDER FIRE

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, July 27 (JTA) -- A Library of Congress report titled "Hamas: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?" has sparked controversy among some members of the pro-Israel community here.

The six-page report, issued May 14 by the Congressional Research Service, describes the Hamas movement in terms that both the Anti-Defamation League and Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) call distorted.

For the first time this year, Hamas, a Middle East-based Islamic fundamentalist group, received its own listing in the State Department's annual study of global terrorism.

Both the ADL and Schumer charge that the Congressional Research Service report, on the other hand, does not fully describe Hamas' terrorist activities.

They also say that the report uses one-sided terminology, such as "occupied Palestine," not generally found in government reports.

The Library of Congress had no comment Tuesday on the controversy.

Last Friday, Schumer wrote to James Billington, the head of the Library of Congress, expressing outrage over the report.

The report's title, Schumer argued, "is grossly misleading and does a tremendous disservice to members of Congress who look to the Library of Congress for accurate research and information."

ISRAEL, MOZAMBIQUE ESTABLISH TIES

UNITED NATIONS, July 27 (JTA) -- Israel and the African nation of Mozambique established diplomatic relations this week.

Mozambique became the 125th country to establish ties with the Jewish state. The relationship was formalized Monday night, in a ceremony at the United Nations.

Signing a joint communique establishing relations were Israel's U.N. ambassador, Gad Yaacobi, and his Mozambique counterpart, Pedro Comissario Afonso.

Mozambique, a Portuguese colony that achieved independence in June 1975, is the latest of a string of African nations to establish or renew diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

The country does not boast much of a Jewish population, but there is a historic synagogue in Maputo.

SHEKEL DEVALUED IN NEW ECONOMIC PLAN

JERUSALEM, July 27 (JTA) -- The Israeli shekel fell in value by 2.14 percent Monday following a series of economic measures announced by the government over the weekend to curb inflation.

By the end of the business day Monday, the exchange rate stood at 2.865 shekels to the U.S. dollar, or one shekel equal to 35 cents.

Jacob Frenkel, governor of the central Bank of Israel, said the new measures would turn the Israeli economy into a "Western" economy, with a lower rate of inflation and one clear-cut monetary exchange rate.

The devaluation of the shekel is chief among the measures, which also include abolishing certain export incentives, reducing import taxes by 2 percent and freezing plans for tax reform.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
EMIGRATION OF YEMENITE JEWS COMES
IN WAKE OF YEMEN'S POLITICAL CHANGES**
By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, July 27 (JTA) -- Aharon and Saadya Tsabari, Yemenite Jewish brothers who had been separated for 33 years, were finally reunited this month.

Saadya, who had remained in Yemen when his brother immigrated to Israel, is one of nearly 300 Yemenite Jews who have arrived in Israel over the past year, after decades in which the gates of Yemen were barred to Jews who wished to leave or to enter.

Another 800 to 900 Jews remain in Yemen.

The unification of the Tsabari family reflects the dramatic political changes that have taken place in Yemen in recent years.

The Republic of Yemen is now being hailed as the first democratic country in the Arab world, following free parliamentary elections held in April.

This is in contrast to the situation which prevailed in the Yemen Arab Republic in the north, where most of the Jews had lived, and in the southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, which had been as devoutly Marxist as its name. The two countries were formally united in May 1990.

The new country's constitution guarantees every citizen the right to travel. By allowing its Jews to travel, the new state of Yemen is also responding to the U.S. government, which has raised the issue at the behest of the American Jewish community.

The recent democratization of Yemen reverses decades in which Yemen was one of the most isolated countries in the Arab world.

During that isolation, 43,000 Jews immigrated to Israel in 1949 and 1950 in massive airlifts dubbed Operation Magic Carpet.

A few thousand more Jews left through 1954, and a few more on the eve of Yemen's 1962 civil war.

Anti-Zionism Didn't Sink In

For most of the past four decades, however, the doors of Yemen have remained firmly shut. Jews were forbidden to send letters abroad, although some did and were sent to jail.

The occasional visit of a journalist or filmmaker was cause for rejoicing, when Yemenite Jews in the West could see pictures of their kin.

In the 1980s, the Jews of Yemen began receiving their first regular visitors: members of the fervently Orthodox, anti-Zionist Neturei Karta sect.

Through their connections with the Palestine Liberation Organization, Neturei Karta received permission from Yemenite authorities to visit the Jews, distributing prayerbooks and other religious articles.

The Neturei Karta delegations also passed out anti-Zionist tracts, attempting to convince the Yemenite Jews that they would be better off waiting in Yemen until the arrival of the Messiah, rather than going to Israel, where many of their relatives had allegedly embraced secularism.

"They decided they would create a little reservation of Jews in Yemen," said Hayim Tawil, chairman of the U.S.-based International Coalition for the Revival of the Jews of Yemen. However, the anti-Zionist propaganda did not sink in, he said.

In September 1989, Tawil became a member of the first specifically Jewish group, apart from Neturei Karta, that was allowed to visit Yemen.

His delegation was officially invited by the government of the northern Yemenite state, where the Jews lived. By then, unification, which had been official policy since 1972, was well under way, with telephone links established between the north and south.

Tawil, the son of Yemenite Jews, said the group was warmly received by the government of Yemen.

On that and subsequent missions, visitors brought thousands of Jewish books. While most of the remaining Jews in Yemen kept their millennia-old religious practice, it was a community devoid of leaders. Only the old people had actually studied with teachers or rabbis.

Instead, said one visitor, "parents would teach their children. They would sit while working with silver, the children would be grouped around a book and would chant aloud from the Torah. The father, who knew it by heart, would listen as children chanted."

The visits from abroad became more regular.

Yemenite Government 'Was Very Kind'

In 1991, two Jewish schools were opened up, with assistance from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The JDC also helped finance the books and humanitarian aid brought to the Yemenite Jews.

Three years ago, Tawil brought back with him a 90-year-old Yemenite Jew, the first to leave the country in 30 years.

Last year, the departures began in earnest.

Under Arab League policy, travel to Israel is barred. The Jews leaving Yemen therefore travel to Europe, from where they are reunited with their families in Israel.

The evacuation of Jews from Yemen had been proceeding under the veil of Israeli censorship, despite efforts by Neturei Karta to publicize the departures in an effort to torpedo them.

Finally, the accumulated publicity and the heightened volume of the fervently Orthodox debate concerning the immigration led to the lifting of the censorship.

In the wake of the publicity, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salih reiterated his country's free travel policy.

The Yemenite "government was very kind," said Tawil. They understood human rights, he said, "and decided to let the Jews emigrate."

Tawil said the emigration should not be looked at as a mass immigration to Israel, but as the exercise of the rights to free travel and family reunification. Most of the Yemenite Jews have relatives in Israel.

Also playing a role in the opening of Yemen were intercessions by the American government.

"We worked closely with (former Secretary of State James) Baker's State Department, members of Congress, and with the Clinton administration. They were very responsive, and consistently raised this issue with the Yemeni government," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

A year and half ago, the Conference of Presidents and JDC convened a committee of the Jewish organizations working for Yemenite Jews.

"The U.S. government has indicated that they consider this one of the key factors in U.S.-Yemeni relations," Hoenlein said.