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POLICE CONCLUDE DINITZ PROBE, REPORTEDLY URGE AN INDICTMENT

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel's police have wrapped up their investigation of Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Dinitz and reportedly have recommended that he be indicted for financial wrongdoings.

Police officials would not disclose their recommendation about an indictment, which in any case is not binding on state prosecutors. But both Israel Radio and Israel Television reported that the police had found grounds to press legal charges against Dinitz for using Jewish Agency funds for personal purposes.

Such a recommendation would put added pressure on Dinitz to step down from his post.

Some leaders of Jewish philanthropic organizations in North America have been urging Dinitz to step aside until the case against him is concluded. They say the scandal has hurt Diaspora fund raising for Israel.

But Dinitz has repeatedly denied that the affair has had an adverse impact on the fund-raising campaign for the Jewish Agency, which is the primary recipient of United Jewish Appeal funds raised for Israel.

When asked by Israel Television whether the outcome of the police investigation would harm the work of the Jewish Agency, its treasurer, Hanan Ben Yehuda, said, "It's not going to make things easier."

But when asked whether Dinitz should step down or take a leave of absence, Ben Yehuda said it is up to Dinitz himself.

"I think we are living in a democratic environment and society and country," said the treasurer. He added that the Jewish Agency should pursue the appropriate legal process and conclude afterward the proper course of action.

Politicians Backing Dinitz

This position is echoed by the Zionists and Israeli politicians who are supporting Dinitz, who also chairs the World Zionist Organization.

It is at odds, however, with the position taken by many leaders of the Diaspora fund-raising organizations. A special committee appointed by the Jewish Agency Board of Governors to monitor the impact of the affair on fund-raising efforts is due to make a recommendation by the end of this month as to a course of action regarding Dinitz's future.

The Jewish Agency's executive committee is scheduled to discuss the advisory committee's recommendation at an Aug. 31 session, and some expect the meeting to result in a vote of no confidence in Dinitz.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has written the advisory committee, asking that no action be taken concerning Dinitz until the state attorney decides whether to prosecute him.

A similar letter was sent by 15 prominent Labor Party members of Knesset to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. It stressed that Dinitz was democratically elected to his post.

The signers included Labor Party Secretary Nissim Zvili, Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur and Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin.

ISRAEL DENIES REPORT'S SUGGESTION IT SHARED ARROW MISSILE TECHNOLOGY

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel is strongly denying suggestions in a congressional report that it might have transferred U.S. technology connected to the Arrow missile development project to third parties.

A report released Monday by the General Accounting Office warned of the possibility that some sort of technology transfer either had occurred or could occur without closer U.S. monitoring of the U.S.-financed project.

News of the report caused a stir in Israel, where the Arrow missile, now in its development stage, is regarded as an important potential future defense against ballistic missiles aimed at Israel by hostile countries.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.), a critic of continued U.S. funding for the Arrow missile, requested the GAO report in March 1992. Byrd serves as chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, which, among its many other functions, appropriates aid to Israel.

"I was concerned whether this program was the best approach to achieving the objectives of both our nations, given U.S. fiscal constraints, non-proliferation goals and other national security interests," Byrd said in a statement released last month.

The GAO report focused primarily on costs and on U.S. monitoring of the joint U.S.-Israeli missile program, not on technology transfer.

But it did raise questions about the potential for a technology transfer by Israel, concluding that the U.S. government had "exercised inadequate control over the technology and funds it has supplied to the Arrow missile program."

The unclassified version of the GAO report gave few specifics relating to the possibility of an Israeli technology transfer.

But an earlier, classified version of the report, distributed last month to congressional and Executive Branch officials, apparently included information on "the question of Israel's record of unauthorized sales of U.S. defense articles and technologies."

Based on the report's findings, Byrd is calling on the Pentagon to conduct a review of the Arrow project, similar to reviews conducted on U.S. weapons systems. The senator has introduced legislation mandating that the Pentagon conduct such a review by next April 1.

Vehement Denial From Rabin

Pro-Israel sources are playing down the report's significance and say the Arrow missile project is not in danger of losing its funding on Capitol Hill. They note that the report devoted most of its criticism to U.S. monitoring policies and not to Israeli actions.

But the report has apparently touched a raw nerve in Israel, which has been stung by similar allegations in the past.

The Israeli government, from Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on down, has vehemently denied any possible impropriety in Israel's use of U.S. technology.

Rabin said Tuesday that Israel would not

violate the terms of the agreement with the United States on the high-tech Arrow missile project.

Israel will stick by its "commitment to the United States under U.S. law vis-a-vis what is allowed and what is not allowed," the prime minister said.

Israel's Defense Ministry also denied that any technology transfer had occurred.

"Israel has neither diverted nor transferred any U.S. technology or any information" generated in the Arrow program to "any third party," the ministry said in a statement Monday.

"Israel has meticulously adhered to the terms and conditions of the bilateral U.S.-Israel" understandings "concerning Arrow and Arrow continuation experiments, and to all export licenses concerning know-how and technologies originating in the U.S.," said the statement, which was released here by the Israeli Embassy.

This is not the first time Israel has had to deal with the sensitive issue of its use of advanced U.S. weapons technology.

Last year, the Bush administration charged that Israel had illegally provided China with U.S. technology relating to the Patriot missile defense system.

A State Department investigation later found no evidence of such a transfer, and the administration was forced to apologize.

But the very suggestion of such a transfer cast a shadow on U.S.-Israeli relations and raised questions in the minds of some about how far Israel could be trusted with valuable U.S. technology.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Cynthia Mann in Jerusalem.)

RABIN SEES HEZBOLLAH DISARMAMENT AS PRECURSOR TO PACT WITH LEBANON By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel could sign a peace treaty with Lebanon six to nine months after forces of the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah are disarmed, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said this week during a visit to the Gaza Strip.

Rabin voiced belief that the Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas operating north of the border between the two countries now pose the sole obstacle to a peace accord between the two countries.

But when or whether Hezbollah could be disarmed is another story.

Earlier, Rabin, who is also Israeli defense minister, presented a gloomy picture of the rise of Muslim fundamentalist elements in southern Lebanon and the territories. He made this assessment during a briefing of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

"This is a Khomeinist Islamic wave, which aspires to reach power everywhere by means of terrorism," said Rabin, referring to followers of the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

He insisted that had the Lebanese army deployed 3,000 soldiers in southern Lebanon earlier this month, it could have put an end to Hezbollah operations.

But at that time, Syria and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon prevented a large deployment of Lebanese forces, allowing only 500 to 600 Lebanese soldiers into the region.

In the nearly four weeks since Israel sus-

pended its weeklong shelling of southern Lebanon, there have been 22 hostile incidents reported in the region Israel maintains as its security zone, the Knesset panel was told this week.

These statistics were compiled by commanders of Israel Defense Force operations in Lebanon, who said that the 22 incidents included bombs, roadside explosive charges and mortar attacks against positions of the IDF and its allied South Lebanon Army.

On Wednesday there was yet another incident in southern Lebanon, when IDF and SLA troops shelled a village in the region in retaliation for an earlier fundamentalist attack on the SLA.

According to IDF reports, there have been a total of 822 incidents in the security zone during the first eight months of 1993. That figure is double the number of incidents in the preceding eight months.

Knesset member Ran Cohen of the dovish Meretz bloc, a member of Israel's Labor government, told the committee that 99 IDF soldiers had been killed in southern Lebanon since the end of the Lebanon War in 1982.

Israel lost nine IDF soldiers in the security zone on Aug. 19, when Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas launched two attacks on IDF patrols.

These incidents were the most serious since the U.S.-brokered cease-fire brought Israel's shelling of southern Lebanon to an end on July 31.

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

PERES DENIES REPORT HE MET WITH PLO OFFICIAL IN SWEDEN By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has denied a media report that he met with a high-level Palestine Liberation Organization official in Stockholm last week.

The report, which appeared in the newspaper Yediot Achronot, claimed the meeting took place, but did not identify with whom.

Peres said Tuesday that he had not met with any PLO officials during his recent tour of Scandinavia.

According to the newspaper, the meeting was arranged by Yoel Singer, who was recently appointed legal adviser of the Foreign Ministry.

In the past, Singer served as liaison between Peres and Nabil Sha'ath, one of PLO leader Yasir Arafat's senior advisers.

Sha'ath met recently in Cairo with Israeli Environment Minister Yossi Sarid and Knesset member Dedi Zucker, both members of the dovish Meretz bloc. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reportedly gave his consent prior to the meeting.

Although it was not officially confirmed, Peres was believed to have encouraged the series of meetings that have been held during the past few months between Israelis and heads of the PLO.

Peres believes that stronger personal ties between Israeli and PLO policy-makers could hasten the reaching of an interim agreement with the Palestinians.

On Monday, Peres was quoted in Helsinki as saying that he had reason to believe that an agreement with the Palestinians was imminent.

He said a preliminary deal had already been worked out, which increased hopes that an agreement in the peace talks will soon be reached.

JEWISH GROUPS APPLAUD INDICTMENT OF SHEIK, ALLEGED KAHANE ASSAILANT

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Jewish groups and politicians are reacting with satisfaction to the federal indictments that have been brought against Egyptian cleric Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman and Muslim activist El Sayyid Nosair.

The indictments were unsealed in New York federal court Wednesday, charging the blind cleric with taking part in the Feb. 26 bombing of the World Trade Center and a subsequent alleged plot to blow up the United Nations and other targets here.

Charges were also brought against Mohamed Abouhalima, brother of Mahmud Abouhalima, the alleged mastermind of the trade center bomb.

Abdel-Rahman was also charged with conspiracy to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

The cleric had been awaiting deportation on immigration charges but is now expected to remain in U.S. custody.

The indictment also brings federal charges against Nosair in connection with the November 1990 killing of Rabbi Meir Kahane, founder of the militant Jewish Defense League and the anti-Arab Kach movement.

Nosair was acquitted of state charges of murdering Kahane in a controversial jury trial that ended in December 1991, but he is now serving a prison term of seven to 22 years for assault and weapons possession in connection with the Kahane shooting.

The new charges brought against Nosair use the sweeping federal RICO Act to charge him with engaging in a racketeering conspiracy to murder Kahane.

'The Force Behind These Plots'

"For a long time I've talked about Sheik Rahman as the force behind these plots," said New York state Assemblyman Dov Hikind of Brooklyn, who, along with U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), was allegedly targeted for assassination by the sheik's followers.

"I'm happy that the Justice Department has finally recognized his involvement," Hikind told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "I did not want him to be deported. I look forward to his being tried and convicted on these charges."

The indictment against the sheik brought a call for the death sentence from D'Amato.

"I applaud the Justice Department's courage in standing up to terrorists," he said in a statement. "If Sheik Rahman is found guilty, he should be given the most severe penalty possible. All terrorists who take innocent lives deserve the death penalty."

Six people died and 1,000 were wounded in the World Trade Center blast.

Binyamin Kahane, son of the murdered rabbi and director of Kahane Chai, a movement of the rabbi's followers, said "a deep-rooted conspiracy involving many people connected to the Kahane killing" is "precisely what we have been shouting about for the last three years."

Jeffrey Sincsky, director of civil rights for the Anti-Defamation League, said his agency is "gratified by the most recent steps taken by the government to address the danger of Islamic fundamentalism. That fundamentalism is a danger abroad is no surprise." But now "it has reared its ugly head on our shores."

WIESENTHAL CENTER QUESTIONS STATEMENT BY SURVIVOR PLACING DEMJANJUK AT CAMP

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- The Simon Wiesenthal Center has reversed its position and said it does not believe the Israeli Supreme Court would seriously consider the testimony of a New Jersey woman who says she remembers that John Demjanjuk had been a guard at Sobibor, where she was interned.

A statement by the Los Angeles-based center was released Wednesday after Esther Raab, a 71-year-old resident of Vineland, N.J., was reported by the Associated Press and The New York Times to have suddenly come forward recalling Demjanjuk at that camp.

In 1983, Raab registered with the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors as a survivor of the Sobibor and Chelmno death camps.

Demjanjuk, a 73-year-old former Cleveland autoworker, was acquitted last month of being the notorious Treblinka guard "Ivan the Terrible." He is now awaiting a decision by the Israeli high court as to whether he will be tried for other war crimes, including his work as a guard at Sobibor.

Raab would have been the first living Sobibor survivor to have identified Demjanjuk as a guard at that camp.

Eight Sobibor survivors who are among those petitioning for a new trial have said they do not recognize Demjanjuk.

Wiesenthal Center officials, following a lengthy interview with Raab on Tuesday, determined that since she had been unable to identify Demjanjuk's photograph in a 1977 lineup with U.S. government officials, the "center does not believe that the Supreme Court in Israel is likely to consider such testimony."

The interview with Raab was conducted by Martin Mendelson, the center's Washington legal counsel, who was the first director of the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations.

Raab had told A.P. that fear stopped her from identifying Demjanjuk in 1977.

Raab said she spent more than nine months at Sobibor before escaping there and recalled seeing Demjanjuk there in the summer of 1943.

"He was there. He was miserable like all of them," she told A.P.

TEENS FROM EX-USSR IN ISRAEL

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- About 160 teen-agers from the former Soviet Union have arrived in Israel to join Youth Aliyah educational programs around the country.

The special project, run by the Jewish Agency for Israel, encourages Russian children and their families to make aliyah.

Approximately 1,000 children are expected to participate.

The majority of the first wave of young visitors who arrived here Tuesday come from areas of ongoing hostilities in the former Soviet Union.

All of the children are assigned to temporary "foster families," who will host them on weekends and holidays.

The Youth Aliyah program lasts for one to three years and offers classes in Hebrew, Judaism and the history of Israel.

COURT ORDERS MINISTRY TO EXPLAIN ITS POLICY ON JEWISH STATUS CASES

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- In a case pitting secular and religious laws against each other, the Supreme Court has ordered the Interior Ministry to explain within 45 days why it relies on the rabbinic courts to determine the Jewish status of immigrants.

The order came in response to a petition filed by the Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center, which claims that the Orthodox-controlled Interior Ministry and the rabbinic courts are exceeding their proper authority.

The petition also charges that the attorney general failed to exercise his authority to prevent the actions of the ministry and the religious courts.

The center's petition was filed jointly with Yelena Mazibovksy, who immigrated here last year.

During the process of applying for citizenship, she was referred by the Interior Ministry's population registry to the rabbinic courts to determine the authenticity of her claim to Judaism.

But according to Rabbi Uri Regev, the center's director, the determination of Jewishness in the population registry is a civil and secular matter under Israeli law, over which the rabbinic courts have no jurisdiction.

He said the rabbinic courts have "incidental authority" over determining Jewish status only in certain matters. Questions about the legality of a marriage, for example, do fall under their jurisdiction.

Rabbi Cites Civil-Religious 'Collusion'

But the Interior Ministry's practice, he said, shows that there is "collusion by the civil and religious authorities to invest" the rabbinic courts "with powers that the legislation has never given them."

Regev said he has been corresponding with Attorney General Yosef Harish for more than two years, trying to get him to stop the Interior Ministry's practices, but has so far not received a satisfactory response.

What Regev terms "most infuriating" about the Interior Ministry's current practice is that it apparently contravenes a 1991 ruling by the Supreme Court that the ministry "has no business referring immigrants to the rabbinic courts and the courts have no jurisdiction" over such matters.

In that case, the Interior Ministry referred to the rabbinic courts the case of an immigrant American Jewish couple wanting to register their adopted infant, who had undergone an Orthodox conversion in the United States.

The rabbinic courts deemed the couple insufficiently observant and rejected the conversion as illegitimate.

The Supreme Court, said Regev, has consistently ruled that the Law of Return and the population registry are civil matters that do not stem from halachah, or traditional Jewish law, and are not limited by halachic definitions of who is a Jew.

"Ours is not a petty petition dealing with formalities," said Regev.

Rather it deals with the "denial of rights of new immigrants to be treated according to the intent of the law," he said.

ISRAEL REJECTS U.N. EFFORT TO OPEN PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITY IN JERUSALEM

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel has rebuffed an effort by U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to send an emissary to Jerusalem to study opening a Palestinian university there.

Boutros-Ghali proposed sending the representative to comply with his obligations under a General Assembly resolution first passed in 1980 and reaffirmed most recently last year.

The resolution was titled "University of Jerusalem 'Al-Quds' for Palestine Refugees." Al-Quds is the Arabic name for Jerusalem.

Israel has annually voted against the measure and turned down requests by U.N. representatives to visit and conduct feasibility studies for the university. As a result, it has been regularly condemned at General Assembly sessions for its "obstructionist" attitude in the matter.

The suggested visit "would not serve any useful purpose," Gad Yaacobi, Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations, wrote in a letter to the secretary-general.

Meanwhile, Israel has received an apology from the United Nations for the existence of official U.N. documents that list representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization as delegates from a member nation.

The PLO has observer status at the world body and is not represented as a country.

Yaacobi gave as an example the June 19 edition of the Journal of the United Nations, which reported, "Statements were made by the representatives of Italy, the Sudan, Ukraine, the United States and Palestine."

In a response, a U.N. official said that the instances specifically mentioned by Yaacobi "had been made inadvertently and that every effort would be made to avoid recurrences thereof in the future."

ISRAEL POLICE TO RECRUIT YORDIM USING HIGH SALARIES AS A CARROT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 25 (JTA) -- Israel's police force has begun recruiting Israelis who have emigrated abroad to return home and join up.

Using relatively high salaries as an inducement, the recruitment drive will attempt to convince Israelis living in the United States to join the Israeli police force.

According to Police Commander Yoram Shahal, deputy head of the new campaign: "Israelis living abroad are often reticent to return home because they don't have jobs waiting for them. In addition to helping the police force enlist new recruits, we also have an important Zionist mission to bring Israelis back home."

Prospective candidates will be referred by their local consulates to a New York-based senior police representative, who will coordinate all referrals.

Examinations of suitable candidates will be carried out in the United States. An accepted candidate will receive a police certificate prior to returning to Israel.

Positions are available in patrol, traffic, investigations, and detective work.

Starting salaries in the police force are some 20 percent higher than other positions available in the public sector, police officials point out.