

**MIDEAST TRIP BY PENTAGON OFFICIAL
SEEN AS REASSURING SIGNAL FROM U.S.**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- A trip to the Middle East by a senior Pentagon official is being seen by some as a reassuring signal from the United States of continuing commitment to the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy accord.

While both American and Israeli officials are playing down the timing of the visit, it comes at a time when Israeli security concerns are mounting amid final preparations to hand over administration of the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho to the Palestinians.

Undersecretary for Defense Policy Frank Wisner will be the highest-ranking Pentagon official to visit the Middle East since the start of the Clinton administration.

One Israeli official described the trip as a "study tour" for Pentagon officials "to get to know people" in the region.

But Michael Eisenstadt, a military fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the trip should be seen as a tangible symbol of continued U.S. support for the accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Wisner's trip, set for Nov. 26 through Dec. 10, includes stops in Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the Persian Gulf states.

No Major Treaties Expected

It follows Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's successful meeting here last week with Defense Secretary Les Aspin, who pledged continued U.S. support to help maintain Israel's strong defense capabilities.

The Pentagon said it does not expect any major treaties or agreements to come out of the trip.

Instead, Pentagon officials are expecting to discuss with their Middle Eastern counterparts such topics as military cooperation, U.S. budgetary constraints and Defense Department philosophy in the post-Cold War era.

"The purpose," said a Pentagon spokeswoman, "is to lay the groundwork for a spirit of new cooperation."

The meetings between Wisner and Israeli officials will likely include discussion of U.S.-Israeli cooperation on technology and U.S. policy on weapons sales to Israel.

Last week, Rabin and Aspin discussed the possible Israeli purchase of the advanced F-15I fighter jet, and that is another potential topic for Wisner and his Israeli counterparts to discuss.

The F-15I deal has not been finalized.

On Tuesday, the Pentagon announced that Israel and Egypt had asked to buy additional weapons from the United States.

Israel has requested the purchase of the Multiple Launch Rocket System, estimated to cost \$97 million. Egypt wants to buy 340 M-60A3 tanks with thermal sights, costing some \$84 million.

Neither the requests nor their timing were especially significant but just "happened to come through now," said Eisenstadt.

He pointed out that Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have already ordered the Multiple Launch Rocket System.

**PERES CALLS ATHENS SERIOUS
ABOUT IMPROVED RELATIONS**

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- The Greek government of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou is serious about improving its relations with Israel, according to Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

The news was welcomed by the Central Jewish Board of Greece, the umbrella organization representing Greek Jewry.

"Although Greek Jews have no problem in Greece, it is nice, for this community that has a 2,300-year presence here, to see an improvement in bilateral relations," said Nissim Mais, the president of the Jewish board.

Peres made the observation here Wednesday, the last day of his visit to Athens.

The day before, Peres had met with top Greek officials including Papandreou, who had served as Greece's prime minister during the 1980s.

In 1989, Papandreou's Socialist government was defeated by the Conservatives, headed by Constantine Mitsotakis, but Papandreou was returned to power in elections earlier this year.

During his previous tenure as prime minister, Papandreou had been sympathetic to the cause of the Palestine Liberation Organization and was highly critical of Israel.

But that has changed, Peres said.

"The Socialist party of 1993 is completely different from the previous Socialist party (of the 1980s) that was very close to the PLO and very cold with Israel," he said.

Socialists of '93 Completely Different

Greece and Israel reached agreements on cultural and scientific cooperation, Peres said.

"Both countries have pledged to act toward peace and development in the Middle East as both our peoples are parts of the same history and share a common sea and a common future," he said.

Peres attributed the shift in attitude of the government to the self-rule accord Israel and the PLO signed in Washington on Sept. 13.

Peres' two-day trip, which ended Wednesday, coincided with the arrival of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, prompting speculation that the two leaders would meet. They did not.

But Peres phoned Arafat while on his way to the airport to depart for a tour of other European capitals this week.

Peres later termed their brief conversation "a courtesy call."

In the official program of events issued by the Greek Foreign Ministry, Arafat was referred to as the "president of the Palestinian National Authority," rather than as the chairman of the PLO.

At a news conference, Arafat was asked whether he thought the Likud party would revoke the self-rule accord if it returned to power in Israel.

"This treaty is not the property of (Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin or mine or any other party," he said. "This treaty is the property of the entire world," he said.

WEST BANK UNIVERSITY ELECTION SEEN AS VOTE ON PEACE PROCESS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- Elections for the student council of Bir Zeit University in the West Bank were being viewed, at least in part, as a referendum on the peace process and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The PLO's Al Fatah wing was expected to win a slim but important victory in elections held Wednesday at the university, near Ramallah.

Although the vote was for the nine-member council, the significance of the contest went far beyond the Palestinian campus.

The contest was the first Palestinian referendum on the peace process since the Israel-PLO declaration of principles was signed Sept. 13.

In the election, students backing Fatah were challenged by an unlikely alliance of candidates backing three rejectionist Arab factions, Hamas as well as the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, both of which are based in Damascus.

Bir Zeit has long been a center of the Palestinian nationalist struggle and has provided many of the delegates and advisers to the current peace talks.

Recent polls among the students indicated that a majority supported the peace process. More than 2,700 students were eligible to vote.

In Jerusalem, Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini said in an interview published Wednesday in a Kuwaiti newspaper that the Israeli capital should become an open city.

Its future lies in becoming a free, open city that is not controlled by any single country, he said.

CHINESE OFFICIALS KILLED IN ISRAELI HELICOPTER CRASH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- Two Chinese nationals on an official visit to Israel were among the five people killed when a civilian helicopter crashed in the Negev early Wednesday.

The Chinese officials were part of an economic delegation visiting Israel from the autonomous region of Manchuria in northeastern China.

They were identified as Ma Dixian, mayor of Xian Yang, the largest city in Manchuria; and Shan Li, vice chairman of the Manchurian Council for Technical and Economic Development.

The remaining members of the Chinese delegation were scheduled to return home Thursday.

Three Israelis were killed in the crash. They were identified as Yoav Peleg, 45, the pilot, of Yavne; Ilan Alter, 36, deputy president of the Israeli Contractors Association, of Ramat Hasharon; and Avraham Gad, a tour guide, of Tel Aviv.

The downed helicopter had taken off at sunrise from Herzliya on a charter flight to Masada, near the Dead Sea.

It crashed near Kibbutz Bet Kama, which is on the Beersheba-Kiryat Gat road in the northern Negev.

Officials would not comment on initial reports that the pilot had flown into a power line.

A department spokesman said that the helicopter, a Bell Air 206, was regarded throughout the world as a highly efficient and safe helicopter, and that the pilot was experienced.

WIFE OF MISSING AIRMAN ARAD ASKS GORE TO PRESS THE CASE

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- Families of Israeli soldiers missing in action have been visiting here lately, hoping to raise interest in the plight of their sons, husbands and fathers.

This week, the wife and daughter of Ron Arad, the Israeli navigator captured in Lebanon in 1986, met with Vice President Al Gore.

And last week, the parents of Yehuda Katz, who disappeared during a tank battle in Lebanon in 1982, accompanied Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on his trip here.

The Israelis are hoping to demonstrate that the fate of their MIAs is an integral part of the peace process currently under way between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

So far, progress in the peace talks has not brought about corresponding progress in resolving the cases of the missing men.

On Monday, Tami and Yuval Arad, Ron Arad's wife and 7-year-old daughter, went to the White House accompanied by Israeli Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich and other officials to meet with the vice president.

Tami Arad requested Gore's help in seeking her husband's release, and Gore pledged American support in the effort, according to the Israeli Embassy here.

And on Tuesday morning in New York, she met for about 20 minutes with Cardinal John O'Connor, who also agreed to help her.

Cardinal O'Connor To Inform Vatican

"The cardinal promised he would do whatever he could to alert leaders in the Middle East to the situation regarding her husband, and ask them to do what they could," Joseph Zwilling, director of communications for the archdiocese, said after the meeting.

O'Connor serves as president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, which works on Middle East affairs.

The cardinal also told Arad he would let the Vatican know of Ron Arad's situation, Zwilling said.

Israeli officials believe Ron Arad was captured by Lebanese Shi'ites and is currently being held by people who are responsible to Iran.

Also Monday, four children from Arad's hometown of Hod Hasharon presented U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali with a 982-foot scroll containing letters to Arad and artwork from Hod Hasharon.

Believed to be the "world's longest letter," the scroll was unveiled Tuesday at the Israeli Consulate in New York.

Boutros-Ghali told the children he was trying to do whatever he could in connection with Arad's case, according to the Israeli U.N. mission.

The children were accompanied by Gad Yaacobi, Israeli ambassador to the United Nations.

But Tami Arad had harsh words for the world body, saying the United Nations did not press enough to gain her husband's release.

Arad said, "I'm 'disappointed because the U.N. did a lot on the release of Western hostages' but not enough on Israelis.

Last week, Joseph and Sarah Katz, parents of Israeli MIA Yehuda Katz, met with State Department officials and others to discuss the fate of their son, who they believe is still alive.

Yehuda Katz disappeared in Lebanon in 1982.

INTRIGUE FILLS LUBAVITCH CIRCLES AS THE REBBE'S HEALTH DECLINES

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- The Lubavitcher rebbe is fighting the most serious medical setback he has suffered since his stroke nearly two years ago.

Meanwhile, his closest aides are fighting over who will control the most important decisions made in the nerve center of the huge Chasidic empire -- including those that directly affect their leader's medical care.

Tensions between the Chasidic movement's leaders are escalating, as is confusion among the Lubavitch themselves, say observers, in a scenario as complex and intriguing as that in any Levantine court.

The rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, now 91, has been suffering a massive infection for about two weeks.

But his cadre of doctors was unable to identify the location of the infection until just a few days ago, when they began treating him with antibiotics that seem to be working, say sources close to Lubavitcher headquarters.

His fever has been high and his overall condition so weak that the rebbe was forced to take a rare trip outside of Brooklyn or Queens, to a Manhattan hospital for tests on Nov. 12.

While the rebbe and the Lubavitch movement are based in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, until his stroke he regularly visited the gravesite of his father-in-law in Queens. It was there that he had the stroke on March 2, 1992.

As the ailing man who has been rebbe since 1951 struggles to recover his health, some of the men who for decades have carried out his wishes are continuing a battle that has been brewing for months.

Did Groner Cause Rebbe's Stroke?

In May, at issue was who would have financial control of the Lubavitch empire's central umbrella institutions.

The Lubavitcher rebbe's influence extends far beyond his Crown Heights headquarters, which coordinates the activities of hundreds of emissaries, educational centers and publishing houses around the world. Its Chabad movement reaches out to unaffiliated Jews from Alabama to Zaire.

In recent weeks, however, the fight has been over the rebbe's medical care.

Rabbi Leibel Groner and Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, two of the rebbe's five official secretaries, have for several years been most closely involved in the rebbe's medical care and at odds over the course it should take.

Now allegations have surfaced that Groner made decisions about the course of the rebbe's treatment that caused the stroke itself and that since have had a deleterious effect on the rebbe's health.

Those siding with Krinsky say Groner sabotaged the rebbe's care, according to Yori Yanover, an Israeli writer who is co-author, with Nadav Ish-Shalom, of a forthcoming book about Lubavitch, "Rokdim u'Vochim," or "Dancing and Crying."

The book is scheduled to be published in Israel and the United States in December, in Hebrew. An English-language translation is planned.

According to those who side with Krinsky, the rebbe's long-time spokesman and driver,

Groner has been interfering with the rebbe's treatment in order to preserve his own status within the Chasidic community.

Repeated phone calls to Groner's office and home were not answered.

Groner's prestige within Lubavitch, like that of any of the secretaries, is wholly based on his access to the rebbe -- that is, on how quickly he can expedite responses between the spiritual leader and his petitioners.

Since these serious allegations began flying within Lubavitch, threats have allegedly been made against Groner's life. He is being protected by two New York City policemen and his own supporters, observers say.

Groner first became closely involved in the rebbe's medical care after Schneerson had a heart attack on Simchat Torah in 1977.

Part of the treatment prescribed by his cardiologist included regular doses of aspirin which the rebbe took for years until he developed eye problems a few months before his stroke.

'A Great Deal Of Sabotage'

Groner took the rebbe to see an ophthalmologist, who suggested the aspirin intake could be contributing to his eye problems, Yanover said.

The rebbe's cardiologist, Dr. Ira Weiss, was said to be leery of taking him off the aspirin but agreed to allow it for a week, to see if the ophthalmologist was right.

When the rebbe suffered his massive stroke two months later, it was discovered that he had not started taking the aspirin again. People in Krinsky's camp believe that the stroke likely would not have happened if the rebbe had resumed taking aspirin.

What is more, say those siding with Krinsky, the cardiologist was not given full access to details of the rebbe's care, according to Yanover.

"During the two months the aspirin was interrupted, (the) accusation (against Groner) is there was a great deal of sabotage going on with Weiss, who had been a chief figure" in the rebbe's medical care since 1977, said Yanover.

Those who side with Krinsky say that the doctor "would come in and Groner would say that the rebbe had no time for him now."

In an effort to ensure that the rebbe gets the proper medical treatment, a prominent and authoritative group of Lubavitcher rabbis decreed, in mid-September, that another individual would be assigned to coordinate all contact anyone -- including the secretaries -- has with the rebbe.

A physician was assigned to be the coordinator, and Groner and Krinsky both reportedly agreed to the new arrangement, which dramatically broke from the way things have always been done among the secretaries.

But the latest wrinkle, according to the Krinsky camp, is that Groner has tried to subvert the new arrangement by videotaping Schneerson as Groner posed a series of questions to the rebbe, said Yanover.

Groner has also reportedly established an independent fund-raising effort named Kupat Rabenu, or "Our Rabbi's Fund," in an attempt to circumvent 770 Eastern Parkway, the Lubavitch headquarters where Krinsky oversees the collection and dispensation of donations.

REMINDER: The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Friday, Nov. 26.

GOEBBELS SPEECH ON PLAN TO KILL JEWS WAS SUPPRESSED BY BRITISH GOVERNMENT

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- A newly discovered speech given in 1942 by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels is leading some experts to believe that the British government suppressed clear proof that Adolf Hitler intended to exterminate European Jewry.

The speech was unearthed accidentally in London's Public Record Office by Sol Littman, the Canadian representative of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Littman made the discovery while researching material for a book on the SS, Hitler's elite shock troops.

News of the find was reported publicly for the first time Sunday in the London newspaper *The Observer*.

Leading British and American experts on the Holocaust have hailed the discovery as "crucial" and of "amazing importance," and some believe that British authorities sat on the speech to avoid embarrassment over London's wartime policy toward Jewish refugees and Palestine.

In the Sept. 23, 1942 speech, the Nazi propaganda chief warned 60 German newspaper editors of the "understandable" Jewish hostility toward Germany.

A copy of the translated text was provided to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency by Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Los Angeles-based Wiesenthal Center.

In the speech, Goebbels said: "There are still 48,000 Jews in Berlin. They know with deadly certainty that as the war progresses they will be packed off to the East and delivered up to a murderous fate."

"They already feel the inevitable harshness of physical extermination and therefore they harm the Reich whenever possible while they still live."

A report on the speech was obtained by the Polish government in exile, which was headquartered in London, and reached the British Foreign Office in May 1943.

'Hopelessly Prejudiced Against Jews'

As shown by handwritten notes appended to the text, the speech was deemed important enough to be read by key officials in Britain's Foreign Office, up to and including Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden.

Eden's personal secretary, Oliver Harvey, once described Eden as "hopelessly prejudiced against Jews." This was reported in "The Splendid Blond Beast," a book by Christopher Simpson that delves into profits made and government malfeasance during the Holocaust.

Eden separated British policy from that of its American allies and opposed prosecution of Nazi war criminals after the war, Simpson also wrote.

Goebbels' speech was never made public and its contents were not shared with the U.S. State Department or with Jewish leaders in Britain.

Suggestions that the British Foreign Office kept the document secret to protect Polish sources inside Germany were rejected by Hier.

"British authorities wanted to protect their Palestine policy (which severely restricted Jewish immigration) and keep Parliament quiet," Hier said.

"If the Jews had known about this they would have raised Cain and they'd have turned up

the pressure for the British to change their policy (on Jewish refugees)," he said.

Goebbels' brief reference to the fate of the Jews was contained in a lengthy talk that dwelled mainly on his concerns that the morale of the German people might crack if faced with a prolonged war. "The German people are not so capable of endurance as the English," he said.

"After the capitulation of France in 1940, there might perhaps have been peace had not England, remembering November 1918 (the end of World War I), believed that she was still able to wear out Germany psychologically," said Goebbels.

The *Observer* reported the reaction of various experts, who all agreed on the importance of the document but differed on the Foreign Office's motives for repressing the information.

Sir Frank Roberts, a key Foreign Office official at the time whose annotations appear on the original document, said, "The Poles used to keep us pretty well-informed. This was clearly important or it would have stopped with me."

"But I don't think the reference to the Jews would have been the report we found most interesting. It would have been the fact that they were preparing for a long, drawn-out war," he said.

Historian Walter Laqueur of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington stressed that this was the first time a top Nazi official spoke openly about killing the Jews.

David Wyman, author of "The Abandonment of the Jews," observed that both British and American officials routinely withheld information about the murder of the Jews. "It would certainly have been in character for them to suppress information like this," he said.

Martin Gilbert, the leading British authority on the Holocaust, stressed that the document's main significance lay in its refutation of the canard that the Holocaust never occurred.

"In terms of denying what happened, it's a crucial document, because here you have one of the people who was perpetrating it actually, specifically outlining what was going on. I think that gives it amazing importance," he said.

(Contributing to this report was JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York.)

ROCHELLE MANNING TO BE EXTRADITED

TEL AVIV, Nov. 24 (JTA) -- Israeli Justice Minister David Libai has signed an order for the extradition of Rochelle Manning, an American-born immigrant, to face murder charges in the United States.

Manning, whose previous California trial resulted in a hung jury, is to be tried again in connection with the 1980 mailing of parcel bomb that killed the woman who opened the package.

Rochelle Manning's husband, Robert, was extradited, tried and convicted on Oct. 14 on the same charges by a Los Angeles jury. He could face life imprisonment when he is sentenced on Jan. 3.

For years, the Mannings, residents of Kiryat Arba, fought a U.S. extradition request for them to stand trial for the murder of Patricia Wilkerson, a secretary at a computer firm who was killed while opening the booby-trapped parcel addressed to her employer.

The Justice Ministry said the U.S. Justice Department promised it would not request the death penalty if Rochelle Manning is convicted, even if the court asks for capital punishment.